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AUTHOR Vinovskis, Maris A.

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ABSTRACT

The 1994 reauthorization of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) introduced significant changes in the structure of federal support for educational research, development, and statistics. After more than 3.5 years of experience with these changes, it is time to assess the results of the new approach. Rather than looking only at recent developments at OERI, this essay tries to provide a broad chronological re-examination of federal strategies for supporting educational research, development, and statistics. By placing the recent changes at OERI in a historical context, it becomes possible to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current reorganization as well as to discover the insights and guidance past experiences may provide. The discussion concentrates on the period after 1960 and focuses heavily on the experiences of the National Institute for Education and OERI. The following chapters are included: (1) "Federal Educational Research and Statistics before World War II"; (2) "Expanding Federal Educational Research in the 1950s"; (3) "Educational Research and the Great Society"; (4) "Creation and Evolution of the National Institute of Education"; (5) "The Reagan Administration and the Challenge to Federal Involvement in Educational Research and Development"; (6) "Changes during the Bush Administration"; (7) "The 'New' OERI"; and (8) "Concluding Observations." Three appendixes contain responses to this report from the Government and Professional Liaison Committee of the American Educational Research Association, the Organization of Research Centers, and the National Research Center for Improving Student Learning an Achievement in Mathematics and Science. (Contains 205 endnotes.) (SLD)

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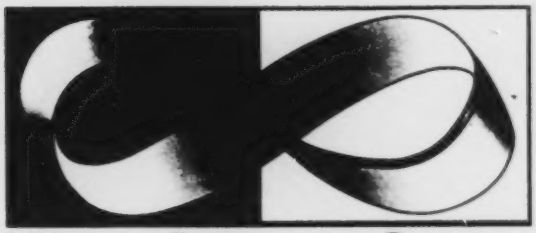

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Maris A. Vinovskis
Department of History and Institute for Social Research
University of Michigan

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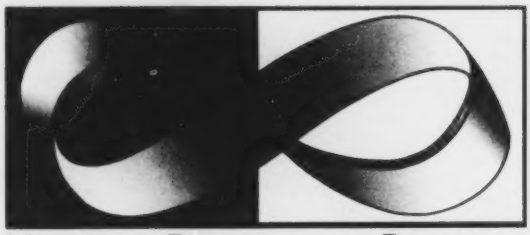

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Changing Federal Strategies for Supporting Educational Research, Development, and Statistics

Maris A. Vinovskis
Department of History and Institute for Social Research
University of Michigan

Background paper prepared for the
National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board
U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education
Richard W. Riley
Secretary

National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board
Kenji Hakuta
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Comments about this publication may be directed to:

National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board
U.S. Department of Education
80 F Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20208–7564
Telephone: (202) 208–0692
Fax: (202) 219–1528
E-mail: nerppb@ed.gov

Contact:
Mary Grace Lucier
(202) 219–2253

NERPPB Web site: ***http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/NERPPB/***

National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board

The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB) is authorized by the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination, and Improvement Act of 1994. The Board was established to work collaboratively with the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) to forge a national consensus with respect to a long-term agenda for educational research, development, dissemination, and the activities of the Office. The Board regularly reviews, evaluates, and publicly comments upon the implementation of its policies by the U.S. Department of Education and the Congress.

From time to time, the Board commissions papers from outstanding scholars and researchers on issues pertaining to educational research and improvement. This publication is one in a series of studies on the federal role in educational research.

The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education appoints members of the Board. They represent the research community, school-based professional educators, and individuals that are knowledgeable about the educational needs of the United States.

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Foreword

In 1994, the Congress declared in Section 902 of Title IX of the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination, and Improvement Act that a significant investment by the federal government in attaining a deeper understanding of the processes of learning and schooling holds the best hope of making a substantial difference to the lives of every student in the United States. It charged the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) within the U.S. Department of Education with the task of developing a sound foundation of knowledge upon which to design school improvements. It urged the adoption of expanded, proactive roles and the creation of new institutions to promote the development of knowledge and the application of research findings.

At the same time, it established the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board to work collaboratively with the Assistant Secretary for OERI to determine the priorities that should guide the work of the Office. A further responsibility of the Board is to advise the United States on the federal educational research and development (R&D) effort.

The role and contribution of the federal government to that effort, now spanning well over a century, is vast, but a little known chapter in the history of the nation. Education today is at the forefront of domestic policy, and numerous panels and commissions are calling for substantial increases in the level of federal R&D funding. It was the decision of the Board to commission a series of papers from outstanding authorities on the federal role to delineate the history and outcomes of federal research initiatives from the recent past and set them in a historical context.

The present paper by Professor Maris A. Vinovskis is part of this series. We are happy to share his work, along with reactions and responses from the field, with a larger audience in the hope that we may gain perspective from it, understand the successes and failures of our predecessors, and appreciate the practical requirements of our contemporary mission.

Comments and responses are welcome and may be addressed to:

National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board
U.S. Department of Education
80 F Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20208-7564

Kenji Hakuta
Chair
National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board

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Many individuals have provided useful comments on this paper. The author is particularly indebted to the current and former OERI staff for their insights and suggestions. Without their continued help and encouragement, this analysis could not have been done. Naturally, the views expressed in this paper are strictly those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education or any other group or organization.

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Introduction

The 1994 reauthorization of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) introduced significant changes in the structure of federal support for educational research, development, and statistics—such as the mandate to create five large research institutes, to establish a policy board, and to expand the number of field-initiated grants. Now, after more than 31/2 years of experience with these changes, it is time to assess the results of this new approach—especially since OERI is slated to be reauthorized in less than 2 years.

Rather than look only at the most recent developments at OERI, this essay will try to provide a broad chronological reexamination of federal strategies for supporting educational research, development, and statistics. By placing the recent restructuring of OERI within a longer historical context, it will be possible to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current reorganization as well as to discover what insights and guidance past experiences might provide for the upcoming reauthorization. Given the limitations of time and energy, the discussion will concentrate on the period after 1960 and focus heavily on the experiences of the National Institute for Education (NIE) and OERI. The time period covered by this analysis ends in 1997. Whenever possible, however, research and development activities at other federal agencies will be mentioned in order to place the results of this analysis in a more appropriate context.

I. Federal Educational Research and Statistics Before World War II

Americans have always relied upon parents and local communities to provide for the education for their children. As public schools expanded in the 19th century, some states gradually became more involved in encouraging and even regulating education.[1] Initially the jobs of most state education superintendents were restricted to collecting, analyzing, and disseminating educational statistics. Educators at that time believed that the collection and comparative analysis of local school data would help to stimulate the expansion and improvement of local public schools.[2]

Prior to the Civil War the federal government played only a minor role in supporting public education—mainly by setting aside land for the establishment of schools in some of the territories and new states.[3] But following that conflict, renewed efforts were made to create a federal agency devoted to education—in part to spur the development of public schooling in the defeated South.[4] After considerable disagreement about the duties and powers of the proposed agency, Representative James Garfield (Republican-Ohio) introduced a resolution which established the Department of Education:

> *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That there shall be established, at the city of Washington, a Department of Education, for the purpose of collecting such statistics and facts as shall show the condition and progress of education in the several states and territories, and of diffusing such information respecting the organization and management of schools and school systems, and methods of teaching, as shall aid the people of the United States in the establishment and maintenance of efficient school systems, and otherwise promote the cause of education throughout the country.[5]

The final legislation not only provided for the collection and use of educational data, but also endorsed a broader, but undefined mission.

Given the ambiguity in the stated goals of the Department of Education, much depended upon the particular inclinations and directives of the leaders of that

agency. Henry Barnard, one of the most distinguished and accomplished 19th-century educators, was chosen as the as the first Commissioner of Education. Unfortunately, Barnard was not a skilled administrator and mismanaged his small staff as well as alienated many members of Congress. [6] He was forced to resign after 2 years and the Department of Education was demoted to a Bureau of Education in 1870.[7] While the stated mission of the agency remained unchanged, Congress indicated its displeasure with the more grandiose schemes proposed by Barnard and others.

John Eaton, a former Civil War general, replaced Barnard and proved to be an efficient administrator and an effective politician. Although he lacked the extensive educational credentials of his predecessor, Eaton over the next 15 years managed to expand the staff from 2 to 38 employees and transformed the Bureau into an effective and respected statistical agency.[8] By the end of the First World War the Bureau of Education had grown further—but mainly because it now also administered the educational and relief programs in Alaska. Over time, the range of activities undertaken by the Bureau expanded beyond its original statistical focus. The collection and dissemination of statistics, which had taken up 35 percent of the Bureau's budget in 1875, comprised only 1 percent of the budget in 1920; at the same time, however, educational investigations grew to account for nearly one-fifth of the total budget.[9]

The Bureau's collection and analysis of educational data had improved considerably since 1870—even though these tasks now comprised only a minuscule part of the overall budget. The dissemination activities of the Bureau had also expanded and flourished. The methods for investigating education problems shifted from writing philosophical and historical analyses to using newly developed social science techniques such as in-depth surveys of local schools or citywide educational systems.[10]

In 1929 President Herbert Hoover created a National Advisory Committee on Education which provided a useful overview of the role of the federal government in education. The Committee criticized the unfocused and uncoordinated federal involvement in education. The report reiterated the importance of the federal role in assembling and analyzing educational data, but also called for more federal involvement in scientific research. It recommended providing federal aid to schools through state grants; and on a split vote the Committee endorsed the need for a cabinet level Department of Education.[11]

During the Great Depression public schools experienced considerable financial difficulties. New Deal programs provided federal support for education, but President Franklin D. Roosevelt distrusted the leaders of the traditional educa-

tional organizations and often bypassed even his own Commissioner of Education, John Studebacker. Not surprisingly, the size of the budget of the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) was smaller in 1939 than when Hoover left office 7 years earlier. [12]

II. Expanding Federal Educational Research in the 1950s

While experiences during World War II helped the development and expansion of the sciences, they had less impact on the behavioral and social sciences. Faced with an unprecedented global war against Germany and Japan, the federal government recognized the need to develop new weapons as well as to improve the existing military technology. Federal research and development expenditures rose from $100 million in 1940 to approximately $1.5 billion in 1945—with much of those funds going for work on the atomic bomb and the improvement of radar.[13]

Behavioral and social scientists also helped the war effort and made significant contributions in areas such as economic planning, survey research, applied psychology, international affairs, and anthropology. Unlike the scientists, who were guided by several coordinating groups, these scholars were scattered throughout many different federal agencies and lacked any central organization or coordination. Compared with their scientific counterparts, these behavioral and social scientists did not receive much recognition or appreciation from policymakers or the public.[14]

Educational research and development fared even worse than the other behavioral and social sciences during World War II. The U.S. Office of Education contributed to the war effort by providing training to more adults and publishing war-related pamphlets. Educational research was not viewed as vital to the war effort and was reduced. The Statistical Division, for example, was forced to operate with only two-thirds of its regular staff.[15] Thus, while research in many fields increased dramatically during the Second World War, educational research and development actually decreased and was relegated to a secondary status within the Office of Education.

Faced with the Soviet threat during the Cold War, Congress continued to provide especially generous funding for scientific research and development. There was however a shift in the type of recipients of those funds. Prior to World War II federal employees had done much of the research in their own agencies; but now the work was increasingly done by researchers at elite universities, special laboratories, facilities of private industry, or newly created institutions such as the Rand Corporation.[16]

The behavioral and social sciences did not fare as well as the sciences in the postwar period. The creation of the National Science Foundation in 1950, however, did pave the way for modest increases in federal expenditures in these areas. Moreover, private foundations expanded their support for behavioral and social science research during the 1950s. The newly created Ford Foundation, for example, played a particularly important role in funding both theoretical and applied research, which addressed pressing social problems. [17]

Immediately after the Second World War the Office of Education did little to improve its research and statistical operations. The agency continued to collect state data and to investigate educational problems; but most of its research activities were limited to gathering cross-sectional data and publishing the results—often without any rigorous analysis. [18] Earl McGrath, the Commissioner of Education, admitted in 1951 that the Office of Education had not been very successful in fulfilling its statistical and research responsibilities. [19]

An important change occurred when Congress passed the Cooperative Research Act of 1954 (P.L. 83–531) to allow the Office of Education to engage in cooperative research activities with colleges, universities, and state departments of education. Until then most of the research sponsored by the Office of Education had been done by staff. [20] Now the Office could solicit and fund research applications from outside groups. While the funding for the cooperative research program was initially very limited and targeted mainly for work on mental retardation, the program provided the precedent and mechanism for future funding of scholars in colleges and universities. [21]

Interest in education, especially scientific and mathematical, increased dramatically following the successful launching of Sputnik in October 1957. [22] The Office of Education expanded its research and statistics staff from 26 to 68 people—thereby almost tripling its in-house data-gathering and research capabilities. While no funds had been made available for cooperative research earlier, $1 million was appropriated for this purpose in FY 1957. [23] The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) (P.L. 85–864) was enacted in September 1958 and much of the administration of its programs was assigned to the Office of Education. NDEA was authorized for $4 billion over a 4-year period and received an initial appropriation of $115.3 million. [24] The bulk of the NDEA funds went for the student loan program; federal matching funds for purchasing equipment to help teach science, math and foreign languages; and graduate fellowships in areas related to national defense. [25] Appropriations for the cooperative research program reached $2.7 million for FY 1959. [26]

III. Educational Research and the Great Society

Overall, the 1960s were a prosperous period for both science and social science research.[27] Federal funding for science research rose from $1.9 billion in FY 1960 to $4.6 billion in FY 1969. Federal funds for social science research grew even more rapidly from $34.8 million in FY 1960 to $217.8 million in FY 1969.[28] And increasingly policymakers looked to the social sciences for assistance in coping with social problems such as eliminating poverty and preventing urban riots.[29]

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the National Science Foundation (NSF) became increasingly involved in the development of classroom curricula. NSF's first effort in this area was the widely acclaimed high school Physical Sciences Study Committee (PSSC) Physics. The agency then funded a high school anthropology curriculum, Man: A Course of Study (MACOS)—a curriculum which became extremely controversial in the early 1970s.[30]

The quality of research in most of the other social sciences improved in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but work in education seemed to lag behind. Although some useful studies had been done, educational research was widely criticized as exploratory, technically unsophisticated, irrelevant to teachers and schools, and inaccessible to the public and policymakers.[31]

Small but important steps were taken in the early 1960s to expand and improve research and statistics at the Office of Education. Funding for the Cooperative Research Program reached $11.5 million in FY 1964.[32] And $5 million of from the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) was targeted for research on the educational uses of television, motion pictures, and printed materials.[33] Yet Professor Francis Chase, who had assessed the Office of Research in the 1950s, continued to be highly critical of the agency in the early 1960s. [34]

Responding to the frequent criticisms of the fragmentation and ineffectiveness of existing educational research and development efforts, the Office of Education established two Research and Development Centers in FY 1964 and announced plans for another three the following year. The agency allocated nearly $1 million for the two R&D centers for FY 1964. The centers were "designed to concentrate

resources on a particular problem area in education over an extended period of time. These centers require the services of a permanent core of professional staff members supplemented by the efforts of practicing educators for 5 to 10 years."[35]

Following the election of Lyndon Johnson in 1964, several presidential task forces were created to investigate and improve the federal government. John Gardner chaired the influential task force on education, which made recommendations on many different topics.[36] The Gardner Task Force acknowledged the centrality of research and development for improving education, but saw current federal involvement in these activities as woefully inadequate and shortsighted:

> Only in the last few years have the states and the federal government responded in any substantial fashion to the need for continuous study for the improvement of education. When viewed against the $33 billion we spend annually on education at all levels, the support for research, even as augmented by foundations and private corporations, is a trickle....
>
> A massive burst of innovation is called for. And in this era of continuous and rapid change, in which every year brings a new set of challenges, we cannot depend upon a single burst of innovation. We need a system designed for continuous renewal, a system in which appraisal and innovation are built in. That is why references to research and development, to innovation and experiment, appear in every chapter of this report. [37]

Instead of being content with expanding cooperative research projects or even with increasing the number of new research and development (R&D) centers, the Gardner Task Force, drawing upon the experiences of the sciences, called for the establishment of national laboratories:

> .... the Task Force recommends federal aid for the establishment of large-scale national educational laboratories that would develop and disseminate ideas and programs for improving educational practices throughout the country. There should be at least a dozen major laboratories and perhaps two or three dozen more that are specialized or less ambitious in scope.
>
> By "laboratories" we do not mean small-scale efforts, operating out of a corner or a department of education, rooted in the interests of a few faculty members, and having little connection with the daily practice of education in the community. As we conceive them, the laboratories would be closely akin to the great national laboratories of the Atomic Energy Commission and should share many of their features. Improvement or innovation in the education of our children is at least as important as the maintenance of our defense and deserves a similar effort. [38]

While applauding basic research, the Gardner Task Force stressed the need for more rigorous, long-term development of educational curricula and practices. They expected the laboratories to forge close links with schools, state departments of education, research universities and, in some cases, even industries. Laboratories were also expected to have experimental schools attached to them and they were to "bring scholars and teachers into a working team." [39]

The recommendations of the Gardner Task Force on research and development were incorporated the following year into Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. [40] With the passage and funding of ESEA, the Office of Education was transformed from a rather small federal agency to one of the largest. Appropriations for the Office of Education soared from less than half a billion dollars in FY 1960 to $1.5 billion for FY 1965. By FY 1967 they had risen to $3.9 billion, a nearly eight-fold increase in 8 years. Most of these funds, however, went for services for at-risk children rather than for research and development. [41]

As the Office of Education grew, the research and demonstration functions of the agency expanded as well. The size of the research budget mushroomed from $3 million in FY 1960 to nearly $100 million in FY 1967 (approximately $40 million of which was for laboratory operations and construction as well as for support of the R&D centers). [42] Overall, the statistical and research functions of the Office of Education grew so rapidly that it was difficult to keep track of the various new initiatives and to coordinate them into a coherent plan for educational development.

As part of the Office of Education's reorganization in 1965, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) was created as a staff unit within the larger agency. Congress welcomed the creation of NCES, but it criticized the ability of the agency to process statistical data—especially due to the lack of adequate in-house computing facilities. [43] At the end of the decade NCES created the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to evaluate the academic achievements of students in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades. [44] Yet overall, data collection and dissemination of statistical information were de-emphasized in the 1960s while research and development activities flourished.

The Office of Research recognized in the mid-1960s that many teachers and school administrators were not aware of the studies being produced by that agency and therefore it created the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). Modeled after the Clearinghouse for Federal Scientific and Technical Information, ERIC was intended to collect and disseminate exemplary research and classroom information, using computerized storage and retrieval of the assembled information. More than a dozen clearinghouses were created and

housed in various universities. ERIC provided considerable help for researchers, but schoolteachers and policymakers often questioned the quality or usefulness of those materials for their own needs. [45]

Some of the earlier assumptions about the nature of educational research and development strategies of the laboratories and R&D centers, however, were changed in the process of implementation. While the Gardner Task Force and ESEA of 1965 proposed large-scale educational laboratories and R&D centers, the Office of Education pursued a different policy. Instead of concentrating the recently expanded research and development funds on just a few large laboratories and centers, the Office of Education, by FY 1967, had funded 20 small regional educational laboratories as well as 10 small R&D centers. Proponents of establishing a larger number of labs and centers assumed that large sums of additional monies soon would be forthcoming. Unfortunately, this was not the case. The original mid-1960s vision of supportive large-scale, long-term research and development had been quietly transformed and ultimately weakened. [46]

Educators and some policymakers had hoped for a major increase in research and development funding in the late 1960s, but domestic federal budget cuts necessitated by the escalating expenses of the Vietnam War ended that possibility. As the Bureau of Research realized that additional funding would not be forthcoming, they reduced the number of laboratories by five in FY 1969 and another four the following year. The net result of these changes was that the high hopes and expectations for the centers and laboratories in the mid-1960s had all but vanished in practice. [47]

IV. Creation and Evolution of the National Institute of Education

Compared with the previous 90 years, and in spite of a significant amount of belt tightening toward the end, the decade of the 1960s saw a major improvement in the funding and organization of federal research and development. Not only had funding risen rapidly, but the creation of R&D centers, the regional educational laboratories, and ERIC provided important new institutional mechanisms for fostering more systematic and long-term research. And the creation of NCES in the general reorganization in 1965 consolidated educational data collection and analysis activities. While not all of these changes had turned out in practice exactly as had been hoped for in theory, all of these developments collectively signaled a new role for the federal government in educational research and development.

Yet educators and researchers working in the late 1960s and early 1970s were not at all satisfied with these numerous and tangible improvements. Why? Mainly because the need for additional and better educational research and development rose even more. When the major federal compensatory educational initiatives like Title I and Head Start were created in the mid-1960s, both policymakers and educators were quite confident that the programs would play a major role in helping to eliminate the so called "cycle of poverty" that appeared to trap disadvantaged Americans.[48] Yet several of the preliminary analyses of these new programs raised serious questions about their effectiveness. Scattered state evaluations of Title I indicated that the program had little impact on helping at-risk children.[49] The ability of Head Start to help the cognitive development of disadvantaged children was challenged by the controversial, but highly influential Westinghouse evaluation.[50] And distinguished scholars such as James Coleman in the mid-1960s argued that "[s]chools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context." [51]

Troubling questions were raised in many different quarters about the ability of the recently restructured Bureau of Research to initiate and oversee the type of high quality educational research and development necessary to improve federal compensatory educational programs. For example, following the election of President Richard Nixon, a subcommittee of the White House Urban Affairs

Council was created. The Subcommittee endorsed the need for more research, but had little confidence that the just renamed Bureau of Research should be entrusted with that assignment:

> No one in the working group was pleased with the performance of USOE's Bureau of Research, recently renamed the National Center for Educational Research and Development (NCERD). In one stormy review session, Moynihan, Nathan, and Morgan had pressed Gallagher [Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation in USOE] to cite a single instance of research conducted under its auspices that had produced useful or significant results, and they had been wholly unsatisfied with the stumbling response. The Budget Bureau faulted NCERD for planning badly, wasting money, and exercising weak direction of its projects. The education specialists on Butler's staff concurred, as did DuBridge's aides and the President's Science Advisory Committee. Federal educational research funds were scant, were heavily committed to the support of a network of regional laboratories and university research centers, and were largely in the hands of traditional educational researchers, a group whose disciplinary breadth and intellectual distinction did not impress those members of the working group who knew something of social science and of scholarship. [52]

Instead, the group recommended establishing NIE—an institution that Nixon had mentioned in passing during his campaign. [53]

Ignoring the numerous difficulties involved in doing high quality research and translating it into practice, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, one of the key architects of NIE, anticipated imminent breakthroughs in the field of educational research and development under the new plan:

> The shame of this [decreasing research fund] is that it is occurring at just the moment when educational research is going through a quantum change in methodological sophistication. And it is also very much widening the range of disciplines which are involved.... The history of science records many moments when persons working in a particular field have been seized with the sense that they were on the verge of [a] major breakthrough in their understanding of a subject they were investigating.
>
> I don't know if anyone has tried to keep score, but one's impression is that this hunch is repeatedly validated, and there is just such a feeling in the world of education research at this time. [54]

Almost no one at the hearings on NIE challenged the activist role for educational research or questioned the desirability of providing educational opportunities for everyone. And many of the witnesses assumed that educational research and development would be modeled after the work done at the National Science Foundation (NSF) or at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). But Hendrik Gideonse, former Director of Program Planning and Evaluation in the National Center for Educational Research and Development, challenged this view of research. He argued that educational research by its very nature was fundamentally different from that funded by NSF or NIH because it was inherently political—an observation which seemed to be validated in the 1980s as critics of NIE attacked it for being too biased and political rather than scientific and objective.[55]

Several congressional critics such as William Scherle (Republican-Iowa) unsuccessfully sought to defeat the proposal to establish NIE because they felt that the proposed agency was an unnecessary duplication:

> This provision simply opens the Federal Treasury to the same educational researchers without any assurance that the quality of education would be improved.
>
> The Office of Education in the last 10 years has spent approximately $1 billion in education research. Most of this was contracted out to various educational research organizations. Under this bill all that would happen would be that a new organization, the National Institute of Education, would be created to do the same thing which is being done now....
>
> By defeating this amendment, the House will have an opportunity to reject the concept that the way to solve problems is to recast an old agency with a new name and increase its size and scope with the same people who run the old program, with additional waste of time and effort.[56]

President Nixon and 92nd Congress finally succeeded in creating the National Institute of Education in June 1972.[57] But funding for NIE was in jeopardy from the very beginning as several influential members of Congress remained hostile to the new agency. As a result, while the proponents of NIE recommended a doubling or tripling of the old research and development budget, Congress actually slashed NIE's budget by more than one-third.[58]

One of the major shifts in federal strategies on research and development in the late 1960s and early 1970s was the decline in enthusiasm for the role of the R&D centers and the regional educational laboratories. Most witnesses at the hearings on the creation of NIE did not expect them to be designated as the primary sites

for educational research and development. For example, James Gallagher, Director of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina, testified that:

> There was a time where the major argument for educational laboratories was that we needed these major institutions to carry out big projects. And we did. I think the time is pretty well past for just institutional support. I think what needs to be done is to put the laboratories and R&D centers under a program support basis. If they can develop in those laboratories or R&D centers major programs that are worthy of support, let's support them. But let's not support them merely as institutions. [59]

In the late 1960s Charles Frye of the Office of Education proposed a "program purchase policy" for the centers and laboratories which would have allowed these institutions to compete for federal research and development funds without guaranteeing them continued funding. NIE tried to implement this concept as the agency did not regard the centers and laboratories as the key institutions for doing educational research and development in the future but ran into difficulties. [60]

NIE's efforts to end guaranteed funding of the centers and laboratories precipitated a bitter and costly battle between the agency and their funding recipients. The Council on Educational Development and Research (CEDaR) had been established in December 1970 to coordinate the activities of the centers and laboratories as well as to represent their interests, but had not become an active and effective congressional lobbying group until a few years later. Faced with the likelihood of losing guaranteed funding, CEDaR worked with the centers and laboratories to persuade the House and Senate appropriations committees to earmark $30 million for the centers and laboratories in FY 1976. CEDaR became an influential and active participant in congressional debates over the future of educational research and development. While the specific tactics ensuring the funding the centers and laboratories varied over time, CEDaR and its congressional allies managed in essence to make those institutions a permanent and mandated component of federal research and development for the next two decades. [61]

Anticipating reauthorization in 1976, NIE commissioned a panel of 10 experts to conduct a 3-month study of the role of the centers and laboratories in federal research and development. The group, led by Roald Campbell, produced its influential, but highly controversial, report which rejected both "the earlier U.S. Office of Education notion of supporting independent institutions which set their own agenda, or the current NIE concept of purchasing discrete products from an undifferentiated set of institutions." [62] Instead, the Panel called for a long-term,

stable relationship with a much smaller, but better funded set of national (not regional) laboratories and centers.

The Campbell Report provoked considerable opposition from CEDaR and some members of Congress. As a result, the 94th Congress called for another review of center and laboratory operations. The congressionally mandated panel, whose membership included more teachers and educators and fewer researchers than the Campbell group, issued a report in 1979 that was much more favorable to the centers and laboratories. The new Panel concluded that these institutions were "a vigorous set of research and development institutions doing work of quality and significance for American education." [63] It endorsed the idea of 5-year agreements with the laboratories and centers and called for a rigorous review of them in the third year; those that were deemed successful would be granted another 5-year extension while those that were unsatisfactory would have another 2 years to correct their deficiencies. The Panel also endorsed a more regional focus for the laboratories. [64]

Based upon the Panel's Report as well as its own deliberations, NIE issued its administrative policy on "Long-Term Special Institutional Agreements with the Seventeen Existing Laboratories and Centers" in January 1979. NIE's position basically repeated and enacted most of the recommendations of the Panel.[65] Thus, after considerable struggle and negotiations, NIE, CEDaR, and the Congress had reached a relatively amicable understanding on the long-term prospects for the then current labs and centers. While not everyone was happy with the new arrangements, there was growing recognition and acceptance that perhaps this was the best that could be done under the existing political circumstances.

There were other major shifts in NIE strategy on federal research and development in the second half of the 1970s. Earlier emphasis had been on applied social science research, now there was an increased focus on basic research.[66] Moreover, responding to criticisms from members of Congress as well as educational practitioners, NIE greatly strengthened and expanded its dissemination operations. By FY 1980, dissemination expenditures had more than tripled from FY 1975 and now constituted 28 percent of NIE's funding—more than was being spent on fundamental research (24 percent), applied research (21 percent), development (17 percent), or policy studies (10 percent). [67]

As dissemination became the single largest category of expenditures, NIE experimented with a wide variety of approaches. Often it just provided funds to help current research and development products be distributed more widely to potential users. It also tried to enhance the capacity of state education agencies (SEAs) to create new or extend existing educational dissemination activities. [68] NIE also established in June 1976 the Research and Development Utilization (RDU)

program to help schools identify their problems, learn about educational R&D products, and use educational innovations. [69]

If basic research and dissemination fared relatively well in the 1970s, development was dealt a serious setback. When the laboratories were established, they had been expected to systematically develop and field test educational products and processes. Several of them worked on large-scale curriculum development efforts in the late 1960s and early 1970s and others pursued other, smaller projects. Altogether, 86 percent of NIE funding in FY 1975 was directed toward development activities.

Congressional hostility to the NSF-funded MACOS fifth grade anthropology curriculum lead to the demise of that program and helped generate distrust of national curricula.[70] The increasingly hostile attitude toward federal support of curriculum projects also persuaded NIE to abandon almost all of its large-scale development activities. NIE funding for development plummeted from $40.3 million in FY 1975 to $27.9 million in FY 1980 (or from 86 percent of NIE funding to 38 percent). Moreover, when applied research could be separated out analytically from the overall development budget in FY 1980, development by itself comprised only one-sixth of the agency's overall funding.[71] Thus, the laboratories developed a more regional orientation in the late 1970s and most of them were forced to abandon any of their large-scale and more nationally oriented curriculum development projects.

The National Center for Educational Statistics continued to expand NAEP testing in the 1970s. It also developed the 1972 National Longitudinal Study (NLS–72) to examine the transition of students from high school to college or into the labor force.[72] While the NCES budget increased from $1.9 million in FY 1970 to $13.9 million in FY 1978, it still trailed far behind those of other federal statistical agencies like the Bureau of the Census ($71.3 million), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (84.3 million), the Agricultural Statistical Reporting Service ($37.5 million), or the National Center for Health Statistics ($38.1 million).[73] Despite this expansion and improvement in statistical collections, expectations for NCES had grown and the agency was criticized for failing to meet the growing needs of the Department's Education Division.[74]

V. The Reagan Administration and the Challenge to Federal Involvement in Educational Research and Development

The landslide election of Ronald Reagan and the unexpected Republican capture of the Senate in 1980 dramatically changed the Washington scene. The new administration eagerly sought to curtail federal domestic spending, to replace categorical federal programs with block grants to the states, and to deregulate federal rules governing state and local behavior. While the Republicans were unable to achieve many of their specific objectives, they did succeed in slowing increases in federal expenditures and forcing a reconsideration of existing government priorities.

The Reagan Administration challenged the federal government's involvement in educational research and development—and included a bitter attack by the new director of NIE. The early 1980s also saw increasing politicization of educational research—with both conservatives and liberals denouncing each other for introducing politics into federal educational research. While NIE survived, in a modified form, the agency was severely weakened as funding was reduced dramatically and much of the existing professional staff was dismissed. But in the area of educational statistics major improvements were made with the reorganization of NCES.

The Reagan Administration had little sympathy for the newly created U.S. Department of Education, which they regarded as Carter's political reward to the National Education Association (NEA). The Administration sought to consolidate most federal educational programs into a few block grants and tried to halt increases in federal expenditures for schooling. Although they were ultimately thwarted in enacting much of their education agenda, the Administration did manage to contain education appropriations during the first term. Overall, congressional appropriations for the Department rose from $13.9 billion in FY 1980 to $15.3 billion in FY 1984—a 10.1 percent increase. But in real dollars federal expenditures during that period dropped 14.4 percent. [75]

As the scramble over scarce dollars intensified during the early Reagan years, NIE did not fare well compared with almost all of the other programs in the Department. Even those members of Congress who supported NIE were not willing to fight for research and development funds at the expense of service programs. As a result, while overall the Department in real dollars lost 11 percent of its funding between FY 1981 and FY 1988, NIE lost 70 percent during that same period (Special Programs was the only unit in the Department which lost more than NIE). [76]

Whereas some programs in the Department experienced only modest budget reductions overall, the NIE research budget was cut severely immediately and continued to lose funding. NIE funds were slashed by 14.9 percent from FY 1980–81 and another 18.6 percent the following year. After a modest improvement of 4.1 percent in FY 1983, funding for the agency was reduced another 13.3 percent in FY 1984. Overall, NIE lost 37.5 percent of its funding from FY 1980–84 (or 50.6 percent in real dollars)—a devastating reduction for an agency which had just begun to recover from its precipitous declines in funding in the early 1970s.

The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981, which mandated all of the budget cuts, recognized the need for giving federal agencies flexibility in carrying out their reductions. NIE was instructed that it could reduce its budgets proportionately. [77] Faced with the huge reduction in funding, NIE proposed to reduce the budgets for the labs and centers proportionately. But CEDaR managed to thwart the agency and lobbied successfully to have the Continuing Resolution Appropriation mandate that lab and center funding could not be cut by more than 10 percent. The net result was that other NIE programs had to be cut even more severely; in essence, NIE funding for most activities other than the labs and centers in the early 1980s came to an almost complete halt.

One bright spot in this otherwise discouraging picture is that in 1985 NIE managed to establish a competitive funding procedure for the labs and centers. Despite numerous difficulties and setbacks, the competition was conducted fairly and expeditiously. NIE maintained the general characteristics of the labs and centers. The regional nature of the labs, for example, was preserved as well as their orientation toward technical assistance. Under the continued and explicit pressure from Congress, however, NIE established three new regional labs in the Midwest, Southeast, and Northwest. Given the political turmoil surrounding NIE and the labs and centers in particular, most observers were surprised and pleased by the overall handling of this competition. [78]

When the Government Accounting Office (GAO) examined the extent and nature of the budget cuts for NIE, they documented the devastation brought about by the combination of overall budget cuts and the congressional protection of the labs and centers. The number of NIE awards declined dramatically from 476 in FY 1980 to 122 in FY 1984; they increased to 168 in 1985. Thus, from FY 1980 to FY 1985 there was a 64.7 percent decrease in awards. [79]

Not all program areas within NIE were equally affected. The labs and centers remained relatively stable during these years while the teaching and learning awards plummeted from 185 in FY 1980 to 85 in FY 1985. Unsolicited proposals (e.g. field-initiated individual grants) collapsed from 58 awards in FY 1980 to none in FY 1984 and FY 1985. Similarly, awards for educational policy and organization dropped from 93 at the beginning of the period to 15 at the end. There was also a move away from funding individual researchers to funding institutions. While 75 percent of NIE awards for FY 1980 were to individual researchers, that figure dropped to 44 percent in FY 1984. [80]

During periods of severe budget cuts, local administrators are often given considerable leeway in how to reallocate their funds as they are in the best position to know the overall priorities and resources in their agencies. But congressional mandates protecting the labs and centers as well as continued support for legislatively mandated programs such as ERIC and NAEP severely eroded NIE's flexibility. While approximately 55 percent of NIE's research obligations in FY 1980 were mandated, by FY 1984 that figure had risen to 79 percent. [81]

At the same time that NIE's budget was cut and more of its activities were congressionally mandated, the agency itself tried to respond to its critics by devoting even more attention to dissemination. The percentage of awards for dissemination rose from 22 percent in FY 1980 to 43 percent in FY 1985 (not including lab or center work). At the labs, dissemination activities rose from 29 percent to 41 percent during these years; the comparable dissemination figures for centers were 12 percent in FY 1980 and 21 percent in FY 1984. [82] As a result of all of these factors, the amount of research and development funded by NIE may have reached an all time low during the first half of the 1980s.

Budgetary cuts were not the only challenge faced by NIE and Congress during the early 1980s. The election of President Reagan and a Republican Senate also brought new leaders to the Department and NIE who disagreed with past policies as well as with each other. Many of the implicit assumptions about educational research and NIE's role that had gone unchallenged during the 1970s now were discussed and contested. The resultant political and ideological turmoil created the impression that NIE was becoming further politicized and thereby contributed to

the growing hostility to the agency even among many of its former congressional and educational supporters. [83]

Edward Curran became Director of NIE in October 1981 over the objections of Terrel Bell, the new Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. Curran tried to reorient NIE toward a more conservative agenda. He regarded NIE as an ideological, narrow social science bastion that had politicized research by using the agency to further a liberal agenda that emphasized equity over excellence in education. Rather than seeing themselves as also politically oriented, Curran and his allies believed they were only trying to correct past mistakes. Paradoxically, while they provided the leadership for NIE during the early 1980s, they also worked hard to abolish the agency along with the rest of the Department.

Isolating himself from the education community as well as the existing NIE staff, Curran refused to reappoint most excepted service employees whose terms expired and tried to replace them with pro-Reagan loyalists who did not share the so-called social science bias of their predecessors. While NIE had always experienced rapid staff turnovers, the situation became even worse during the early Reagan years. Given the dramatic budget cuts, there was a sizable drop in the total number of NIE professionals. Thus, during a period of severe budgetary reductions the professional staff of NIE was cut by nearly half; of the NIE professional staff in FY 1986, only about one-fourth of them had been with NIE prior to Curran's tenure of office. [84]

Curran, as well as his successor Robert Sweet, repeatedly clashed with the educational establishment, the Congress, and Secretary Bell in particular. They were accused of politicizing NIE by changing research topics to reflect a right-wing agenda, ignoring the peer review system, firing NIE professionals, hiring unqualified employees (some of whom had been active in Republican politics), and ignoring congressional mandates. On the other hand, Curran and Sweet felt that they were being persecuted for their conservative views and for their willingness to challenge the liberal establishment. Eventually Curran was fired by Secretary Bell for insubordination and was replaced by Manuel Justiz (after the unsuccessful attempt of Sweet to be appointed as the director of NIE). [85]

Secretary William Bennett, who replaced Bell in 1985, also reorganized the U.S. Department of Education. As part of this effort, NIE was merged with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Library Programs were moved into the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). Most education policymakers and researchers opposed this merger as unnecessary; some feared that this reorganization might lead to the downgrading of the importance of research. [86]

After notifying the Congress about the proposed reorganization, the Department went ahead with the merger of NIE, NCES, and the Library Programs. The new plan created five programs within OERI (Information Services, Office of Research, Center for Statistics, Programs for Improvement of Practice, and Library Programs) and reduced the role of the National Council on Education Research (NCER) to an advisory policy group. Chester Finn, Professor of Education at Vanderbilt University and active participant in educational policymaking in Washington, was named as the new Assistant Secretary of OERI.[87] When OERI was reauthorized in 1986, most members of Congress as well as most representatives of the major educational groups now accepted the new changes.[88]

The collection, analysis, and dissemination of educational statistics were greatly improved in the late 1980s. Despite some tangible improvements in the 1970s, NCES was not highly regarded by either researchers or policymakers. In late 1984 OERI Assistant Secretary Donald Senese asked the National Academy of Science (NAS) to undertake a thorough analysis of the agency. The NAS Panel met for 2 years and issued a report very critical of NCES:

> We wish to emphasize the seriousness with which we view the center's problems. We believe that there can be no defense for allowing the center to continue as it has for all too long.... Without strong and continuous commitment and demonstrated determination to undertake wide ranging actions to change both the image and the reality of the center, we are unanimous in our conviction that serious consideration should be given to the more drastic alternative of abolishing the center and finding other means to obtain and disseminate education data....
>
> We emphasize strongly, however, that we believe the preferred course of action is to begin the process of improvement. As we have noted, the center's problems are long-standing and pervasive, but if faced openly they can in time, be overcome.[89]

Fortunately for the future of NCES, two determined and capable individuals stepped forward to revitalize the agency. Assistant Secretary Finn focused on helping to find the staff and financial resources necessary to improve NCES. And Emerson Elliott, the future first Commissioner of Education Statistics, skillfully provided NCES with the leadership necessary to make it an outstanding statistical agency.[90]

VI. Changes During the Bush Administration

While OERI continued to be plagued by some of the same problems that had always faced the agency, there were a few promising signs of improvement during the Bush Administration. Under the direction first of Christopher Cross and then of Diane Ravitch, OERI regained much of its former funding and even enhanced its intellectual reputation. Yet many observers, including some key congressional members, continued to see OERI as a troubled and crippled institution.

The leadership of OERI in the Bush Administration presents a mixed picture. During part of these years OERI was managed by two very distinguished and able individuals—Cross and Ravitch. On the other hand, the thwarted attempt to appoint Patricia Hines, who was widely portrayed as a partisan, unqualified conservative activist, raised fear and hostility among many researchers and members of Congress. Perhaps most disturbing of all, there were five changes in OERI leadership within that 4-year period.

The overall funding of OERI improved considerably during the Bush Administration and reversed the dramatic funding decreases of the early 1980s. Excluding the programs for libraries, OERI funding rose from $78.2 million in FY 1989 to $286.2 million in FY 1993—an astounding 266 percent increase. Even taking into consideration changes in the value of the dollar, funding for OERI rose by 214 percent. Indeed, in real dollars the overall OERI budget was the highest since FY 1973. [91]

Most of the rapid increase in OERI's budget, however, was not in the research or statistics accounts, but in the transferred or newly mandated programs designed to improve education. For example, the Javits Gifted and Talented Program, the Blue Ribbon Schools, and the Eisenhower Math and Science Program were added in FY 1989; Mid-Career Teacher Training and Educational Partnerships were acquired in FY 1990; and the Evaluation of Education Reform, the National Literacy Institute, and the Summit were added in FY 1991.

The gradual and often unnoticed addition of these new programs in the late 1980s and early 1990s fundamentally altered the overall mix of OERI activities—though

many observers and even some staff have not always appreciated the full impact of this major change. In FY 1989 funding for NCES, the labs and centers, field-initiated research, and ERIC comprised 98.7 percent of the overall OERI budget with less than $1 million for other activities. But by FY 1993 funding for these more traditional OERI activities was only 52.8 percent of the overall budget ($135.0 million was allocated for the new programs). Thus, at the same time that the fiscal importance of OERI as an agency increased substantially during the Bush Administration, the relative amount of monies devoted to NCES, labs, centers, ERIC, or field-initiated studies dropped sharply.

Within the more traditional OERI funding categories, NCES increased its budget the most. The NCES budget rose from $31.1 million in FY 1989 to $78.9 million in FY 1993. Moreover, combined with the sizable increases for statistics in FY 1987 and FY 1988 the statistical components of OERI were expanded substantially. In real dollars, more monies were spent on the collection, preparation, analysis, and dissemination of statistical information than ever before. On the other hand, ERIC and field-initiated research saw only a modest gain in expenditures with the latter continuing to be an almost invisible and minuscule part of OERI activities.

Funding for the labs and centers increased substantially during the Bush Administration. Funding for labs rose from $22.1 million in FY 1989 to $36.5 million in FY 1993—a surprisingly large increase of 65.2 percent; similarly, funding for centers rose from $17.8 million in FY 1989 to $27.7 million in FY 1993—a slightly lower, but significant increase of 55.6 percent.[92] Most of the increase in center and lab funding was due to congressional pressure and earmarking of additional monies—especially a sizable $4–$6 million annual rural education initiative designated solely for the labs.

Although the overall OERI policy toward the labs and centers did not change much during the Bush Administration, the number of centers expanded while the average size of each decreased. This change had began under Assistant Secretary Finn and reflected his strong and influential views of the differential value of those institutions:

> In terms of our investments in the labs and centers themselves, the news is mixed. The labs, I believe, have not been a reliably remunerative investment. Their impact—while admittedly difficult to assess—is practically invisible. For decades, the labs were shielded from competition by Congress; this has further diluted the value of the taxpayer's investment in them. Finally, these institutions simply cannot provide services to more than a few districts in our immense education system. That we spend

about half of OERI's research and development funds on them is, then, almost by definition, a poor investment.

Our investment in centers has been more fruitful. Though their impact is also difficult to gauge, they do a different kind of work than the labs.... While some centers do little work of conspicuous value, others are solid and productive. But the current arrangement of a limited number of relatively large centers—which we inherited from NIE—still has the effect of confining the number of topics we research and the approaches we can take to the study of each topic. [93]

Following up on his call for more centers, Finn established several minicenters. Each of these minicenters was funded at an annual rate of about $500,000. However, he was unable to persuade Congress to change the structure of the labs. Finn did appoint a panel to evaluate the lab system, but left office before it completed its work. That panel reaffirmed the regionality of the labs, but also called for a more national focus as well as more concern about the diminution of practitioner-oriented research at those institutions. [94]

Cross continued the basic policies of his immediate predecessors in regard to the centers and labs, but expanded the number of centers funded in the 1990 competition. With 14 of the existing center contracts expiring in 1989, the Office of Research (OR) in OERI planned to establish 12 new ones, but looked at another 7 for possible consideration. Many of the OERI career staff favored a smaller number of centers, which would be funded at a higher level. But Cross recommended that 18 new centers be funded—thus making a total of 25 centers supported by OERI. [95]

Cross, who had chaired the earlier panel to look at the labs, presided over the successful lab competition of 1990. Under pressure from Congress, the number of labs were expanded from 9 to 10; although there were some modest changes in the orientation of the labs, the overall system remained very similar in its basic outlines set forth in the 1985 guidelines. Recognizing the interest of the Congress in dissemination, Cross emphasized the role of dissemination for both the labs and centers.

When Diane Ravitch began her term as head of OERI, she was not especially familiar with the work of the labs and centers, but had heard from several sources that it was not of uniformly high quality or value. [96] She appointed Maris Vinovskis, a scholar from the University of Michigan, as her Research Advisor and assigned him the task of assessing the quality of work of the labs and centers. Vinovskis found that much of the work of the centers and labs was fragmented and uncoordinated and that the percentage of monies actually spent on research

and development at those institutions was surprisingly modest (with a large portion of their budget spent on overhead, administrative costs, and dissemination). Moreover, he found the quality of the research produced by the labs and centers was quite uneven and needed considerable improvement. [97]

NAS had been commissioned to reexamine the role of the federal government in educational research and development with particular focus on OERI. The NAS Panel issued their influential recommendations in 1992. It called for the reorganization of OERI's research efforts into three, four, or five R&D directorates. "Each directorate would coordinate R&D centers, field-initiated research programs, special studies, and linkages with the Reform Assistance Division." [98]

The NAS Panel recommended keeping the centers, but suggested that they should be modified:

> The committee recommends several changes to expand their contributions in the future. First, the centers should undertake considerable (sic) more basic research than they currently do. Second, the centers should engage in more sustained efforts of applied research, development, and demonstration, aimed at nurturing new methods, approaches, and tools to full maturity. Such efforts require long-term institutional support. Third, innovative methods, programs, and processes developed by the centers should be subject to a quality assurance process before wide-scale distribution. [99]

The Panel also criticized the insufficient funding of the new OERI centers:

> Most of the centers now receive less than $1 million in annual support from OERI. The committee cannot imagine a robust R&D center operating at much less than $3 million annual in core funding. Without that level of support, there will not be a critical mass, diversity of expertise, and scale of operation that are needed to tackle the difficult research problems and development efforts that confront the nation's schools. Some of the proposed R&D directories in OERI might have only one large center. Others would have several. A center might engage in both research and development or might focus exclusively on one or the other. [100]

Compared with critics of the labs, such as Finn, the NAS Panel was much more positive about the current and future contributions of these institutions. They recommended the continuation of the labs, but did suggest ways to make them more effective agents for stimulating and sustaining educational reforms:

> *OERI's regionally governed laboratories should be administered by the Reform Assistance Directorate and converted to Reform Assistance Labo-*

> *ratories (RALs) with liaison and assistance staff assigned to each state in their respective regions....*
>
> The laboratories are in a good position, with some modifications, to facilitate school reform.... The committee foresees at least five modes of operation by which the RALs would foster education reform and the creation of self-sustained learning communities. First, RALs would conduct a wide range of activities: applied research, development, demonstrations, evaluations, dissemination, state policy assistance, and technical assistance for the purpose of facilitating school reform. As with the centers, the RALs' innovative methods, programs, and processes should be subject to a quality assurance review.... Second, the RALs would assign a few liaison and assistance staff to each state in their respective regions.... Third, the RALs would scout for exemplary practices developed in the field by teachers and administrators and help them in further refinements, evaluations, and preparation of applicants for Program Effectiveness Panel (PEP) certification. Fourth, the RALs would provide short- and intermediate-term technical assistance to districts and schools through various means, including personal visits by RAL staff, training or trainers, telephone assistance, and mailed materials.... Fifth, the RALs would conduct long-term assistance at a few sites, with a RAL staff member, backed by the full RAL, spending 1 year or more providing intensive technical assistance. [101]

The NAS Committee also made other suggestions about these institutions, including a controversial recommendation questioning the necessity or advisability of open competitions for labs and centers every 5 years. [102]

During the lengthy reauthorization process in the early 1990s, Representative Major Owens (Democrat-New York) held extensive hearings on the agency and expressed disappointment with the past and current achievements of OERI. He frequently complained that one of the primary obstacles to the provision of adequate research and development was the highly politicized nature of the agency. [103] Most observers agreed that NIE/OERI had become more involved in political controversies in the early 1980s, but differed amongst themselves interpreting the situation in OERI in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For example, when Ravitch challenged Owens to produce a single recent example of politicization at one of his hearings in 1992, Owens failed to respond. [104]

Owens also expressed strong dissatisfaction with the existing Johns Hopkins Center on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students and called for the creation of another, larger institution which would address many of the same

topics and issues.[105] The attack on the Johns Hopkins Center was surprising since the review of the R&D centers by Vinovskis found it to be one of the more productive and accomplished institutions he visited.[106] Arthur Wise, Chair of the AERA Government Professional Liaison Committee, went even further and called for a more comprehensive and ambitious reorganization of OERI. Wise recommended the creation of several large national research institutes of education modeled on the National Institutes of Health.[107] Reinforced by the NAS recommendations in 1992, the idea of four or five large national research institutes gradually became accepted by everyone and was eventually incorporated into the reauthorization legislation of both the House and Senate.

The reauthorization legislation failed to gain quick passage, however, because of fundamental differences between the House and Senate over the creation of an OERI policy board. Although both chambers called for creating a board, the Senate version would have made the board more of an advisory body than the House bill. Moreover, the House version specified that the 20-person OERI policy board had to be selected from nominations from a few designated research and educational groups—a provision vehemently opposed by the Bush Administration, the Senate, and even the Republican members of the House Committee.[108] Although Representative Owens, the chief architect of the policy board, ultimately in the closing days of the 102nd Congress was willing to compromise, it was too late and the legislation died without action.[109]

With the election of President Bill Clinton, Ravitch resigned in January 1993. As she left office after 18 months, she singled out OERI's accomplishments in helping to launch the national standards projects, developing and publishing the popular "*Helping Your Child...*" series, and starting to create SMARTLINE (an interactive, computer-based network for disseminating information to teachers and parents). Ravitch also provided an interesting and important reversal of what she now regarded as the major problems facing OERI:

> When I came to OERI, I thought, like so many others, that the biggest problem in the agency was a need for more and better dissemination. I no longer believe that. There are two big problems, and they are pretty basic:
>
> *Problem number one*: OERI has never had the appropriations to support a good research program; a report from the National Academy of Sciences noted that federal funding for education research has declined by 88 percent in constant dollars over the past 20 years. It recommended an increase of $267 million each year for five years, in contrast to current funding in OERI of some $58 million.

> *Problem number two*: The agency does not have enough first-rate researchers inside the agency. There is presently a small cadre of able researchers in OERI, but their numbers are too few, and many are burdened with administrative duties. This has had a deleterious impact on OERI's ability to carry out its research mission.
>
> The OERI research team should analyze, synthesize, and explain education research to practitioners and the public. The research staff should integrate the data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics—including student assessments and longitudinal studies—with the studies generated by the national research centers, regional laboratories, and independent scholars. But these important expectations are currently beyond reach because of the small number of researchers on OERI's staff. Strengthening dissemination without strengthening the agency's internal capacity to gather and synthesize research findings would be a futile exercise. [110]

Unfortunately, the recognition that the lack of distinguished scholars has seriously stifled the functioning of OERI came just as Ravitch left office and too late for her to remedy this major shortcoming within the agency.

VII. The "New" OERI

The reauthorization of OERI in March 1994 significantly altered the structure as well as some of the operating principles of the agency. Combined with the return of the Democrats to the White House after a hiatus of more than a decade, many educators and policymakers hoped for a more harmonious partnership between OERI and Congress, which might result in some major improvements. Yet often unanticipated and unintended changes at the agency weakened its ability to provide high quality educational research, development, and statistics.

The Transition in OERI

Emerson Elliott was named as the acting Assistant Secretary of OERI on January 22, 1993. Elliott was the Commissioner of Education Statistics at the National Center for Education Statistics and was credited with having transformed the organization into a highly effective and widely admired federal statistical agency.[111] While the few strictly political appointees in OERI from the Bush Administration were told to resign (the so-called Schedule C appointees), Elliott asked everyone else to remain at their posts and to continue to function as before.[112]

The White House nominated Sharon Robinson as the new Assistant Secretary of OERI.[113] Robinson had earned a doctorate in 1979 from the University of Kentucky in educational administration, served as a middle school and high school classroom teacher, and was the Director of NEA's Instructional and Professional Division from 1980 through 1989. Since January 1990 she had been the Director of the National Center for Innovation—NEA's research and development unit. Robinson was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in late June 1993.[114]

Unlike Diane Ravitch, her predecessor, Robinson was not considered a major researcher or a distinguished scholar, but she was deeply committed to increasing the utilization of educational research in the classroom and improving teacher professional training. Robinson was particularly interested in closer collaborations between researchers and classroom teachers and emphasized the value of teamwork. She downplayed expanding and revitalizing OERI's research staff, but stressed the need for developing working partnerships between researchers and teachers. Providing equal public educational opportunities for all children was one of her primary goals—especially helping disadvantaged minority students to

obtain adequate resources and assistance. She was a very dynamic and thoughtful speaker and received a rare standing ovation from the OERI staff at her first general agency meeting. [115]

As we have discussed earlier, disagreements over the nature and powers of the proposed OERI policy board had stalled the reauthorization of OERI in 1991 and 1992. [116] With the arrival of the new administration, there was considerable optimism that OERI might be reauthorized quickly, but that did not occur in 1993. [117] A compromise was finally reached the following year. Rather than developing and controlling the long-term OERI research agenda, the policy board now was authorized to work together with the Assistant Secretary to draft that plan. Having settled their few differences, OERI was easily reauthorized as part of Goals 2000: Educate America Act on March 31, 1994 (as Title IX of P.L. 103–27). [118]

The law called for the establishment of five National Research Institutes: the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education; the National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum and Assessment; the National Institute on Education of At-Risk Children; the National Institute on Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Education; and the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management. The research institutes together were authorized at $100 million for FY 1996; at least 20 percent of those funds had to be allocated to field initiated research and at least one-third to national research centers. The law created a 15-member National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB). The legislation also called for the creation and use of high quality standards for the conduct and evaluation of OERI research activities. Finally, the law mandated the establishment of the Office of Reform Assistance and Dissemination (ORAD) which would include institutions and activities such as the regional educational laboratories, the Educational Resources Information Clearinghouses (ERIC), and the National Diffusion Network (NDN).

The reauthorization of OERI was welcomed by most educators, policymakers, and researchers. Despite the earlier battles over the nature and powers of the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board, most commentators were satisfied with the eventual compromise. And almost everyone thought that the restructuring of the OERI was a step in the right direction—though some expressed concern about both the manner and the pace of implementing the new legislation. [119]

Funding Increases and Staff Reductions

In an earlier section of this essay, the dramatic increases in overall OERI funding during the Bush Administration were discussed. OERI funding continued to grow

during the Clinton Administration—though at a considerably slower pace than in the previous 4 years. Overall funding rose from $286.2 million in FY 1993 to $398.1 million in FY 1997—a sizable 39 percent increase during those 4 years (the rate of increase in the previous four years had been a phenomenal 266 percent). Even in constant 1996 dollars, the rise in overall OERI spending from FY 1993 to FY 1997 was a substantial 25 percent (but still much less than the 214 percent constant dollar increase from FY 1989 to FY 1993).

The amount of money spent on the more traditional OERI programs (NCES, the centers and labs, field-initiated research, and ERIC) rose by only 25.3 percent from FY 1993 to FY 1997 while money for the other, more recently added functions increased by 54.0 percent. As a result, the proportion of OERI funds allocated for the more traditional programs continued to decline (98.7 percent in FY 1989; 52.8 percent in FY 1993; and 47.6 percent in FY 1997). [120]

How one interprets the great expansion in OERI's nontraditional funding since FY 1989 depends in part on what one thinks about the current state of educational research and development. If one really believes that we already have a "treasure chest" of well researched information that is simply awaiting broader dissemination, then the direction of the recent changes in relative funding at OERI are welcome. But if one thinks that we still lack adequate research and development to provide much guidance for educators and policymakers, then the increasing focus on educational technology and dissemination might seem somewhat premature and misplaced. For example, in FY 1997 approximately the same amount of money was being spent by OERI on new educational technology projects as was spent on the traditional centers, labs, field-initiated research, and ERIC combined. Given the recent sizable staff reductions, one might question the wisdom of a research focused agency embarking on such new and large-scale initiatives—especially since many of them do not involve real research or development activities. [121]

One of the most neglected subjects has been the recent OERI staff decreases and their impact on the functioning of the agency. There was a sizable reduction in OERI employees during the early years of the Reagan Administration followed by a small recovery in staff from 425 in FY 1988 to 448 in FY 1992 (a 5.4 percent increase). [122]

Staffing at the U.S. Department of Education during the Clinton Administration has been pulled in opposite directions. On the one hand, Congress expanded federal education funding and authorized the Administration to staff new or existing initiatives such as the Direct Federal Student Loan Program. These developments increased the need for additional staff. On the other hand, the reinvention of the federal government was predicated in large part upon delivering

services more efficiently so that the overall size of the federal government staff could be reduced. The net result in practice has been a small decrease in staff full-time equivalents (FTEs) at the Department from 4859 in FY 1992 to 4655 in FY 1996 (a 4.2 percent decrease).

But if the overall size of the Department staff has remained relatively stable, there have been sizable and largely unnoticed shifts among the various agencies. OERI was one of the agencies which lost a large proportion of its staff—from 448 in FY 1992 to 358 in FY 1996 (a decrease of 20.2 percent). Moreover, the staff reductions did not end. By March 1997 OERI lost another 20 staff members (down to 338 FTEs). Compared with the situation when Assistant Secretary Ravitch left office in January 1993, the OERI staff had been reduced by approximately 25 percent.

Another perspective on the potential problems caused by the reductions in the staff is to look at changes in the level of federal expenditures per FTE in OERI. While this is a complex ratio and by no means an entirely accurate indication of the amount of actual work facing the staff, this crude index does provide us with another useful perspective on the changes over time. In the early 1980s each staff member at OERI represented in constant 1996 dollars approximately $170,000–$200,000 worth of activity. Even though the Reagan Administration made major cuts in staff, they were matched by reductions in agency spending so that the burden of work from this perspective remained roughly the same. During the Bush Administration, however, the large increases in OERI funding were only accompanied by modest staff increases so that by FY 1992 each individual in OERI accounted for approximately $975,000 in activities (in constant 1996 dollars)—nearly 4 or 5 times as much as earlier. With the continued increases in real expenditures at OERI as well as the one-quarter reduction in staff, each agency employee now represents $1.5 million (in constant 1996 dollars).[123] Thus, as the federal expenditures in real dollars in OERI have risen rapidly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the availability of staff to oversee them has dropped dramatically.

At the same time that the permanent OERI staff was reduced, another major shift in staffing occurred without much notice from within or outside the agency—the elimination of excepted service hiring. When NIE was created in the early 1970s, one of the most useful procedures granted to the agency was the option to hire outstanding experts outside of the regular civil service system. These individuals could be employed for 3-year terms (renewable one time) to help with a particular problem. Critics charged that excepted service personnel were sometimes hired to circumvent the regular system or that the system was abused by politicians in order to hire unqualified friends. But overall, excepted service continued to be used despite periodic challenges to the actual practices. [124]

In recent years, excepted service has fallen into almost total disuse at OERI. Congress was persuaded in 1994 to set much more stringent criteria for hiring anyone on the excepted service rolls. The new law still allows the hiring of scientific or technical employees for a 3-year period, but it mandates competitions for those jobs as well as provides a fairly narrow definition of who could be hired. Now one has to demonstrate that the scientific and technical needs cannot be met through the regular civil service system—an almost impossible task in principle given the sizable surplus of unemployed or underemployed behavioral and social scientists today. [125]

The effects of this change in hiring criteria can be seen by the elimination of almost all excepted service employees in OERI. In early 1993 there still were approximately 20 excepted service employees in OERI; in June 1997 there were only two excepted service staff members left—mostly due to the restrictions of the new law and the reluctance of the management of OERI to use the new procedures. Interestingly, there has been almost no notice taken by and certainly little protest from educational researchers or policymakers in regard to the elimination of this hitherto innovative way of bringing new ideas and people to OERI on a temporary basis.

One interesting but expensive staffing development is the effort by NCES to create a special outside contractor as a quasi-permanent source of professional and technical help. Many federal agencies already hire outside contractors to perform discrete tasks such as organize conferences, write position papers, and handle travel arrangements for invited speakers. This not only helps the agency to do its work, but it is also a way of overcoming government limitations on staff hiring. Due to substantial overhead expenses, these contracts with outside firms often can be considerably more expensive than if the federal government had been allowed to hire its own employees to do the work. [126]

Seeking to overcome the recent FTE reductions, NCES created a separate entity in 1995 to help with its technical and statistical work—the Education Statistical Services Institute (ESSI).[127] ESSI was envisioned as a long-term adjunct of NCES that would work closely with the agency. Approximately 16 of the employees of ESSI in March 1997 had their own offices in NCES—a rather unusual arrangement. Some complaints have been raised that the ESSI personnel are in essence a new type of quasi-government employee and that their presence has diminished opportunities for advancement for regular federal career employees. Questions also have been raised about the relative cost of the operation. Given the overhead for the operation, one rough estimate is that the actual cost of an ESSI employee may be approximately 40 percent higher than if NCES had been able to put that same individual on the federal payroll. Yet at the same time, given the drastic

staff reductions in OERI and the increasing volume of business, some new mechanisms need to be developed in order to handle the work of the agency.

Even as OERI lost one-quarter of its staff, there were still considerable opportunities for hiring. It is estimated that in recent years, approximately 7–10 new OERI employees are hired annually.[128] Some of these are recent college graduates entering federal service through the Outstanding Scholars Program. Staffing from this pool reduces the bureaucratic difficulties of hiring someone (it is much easier to process paperwork for an individual from the Outstanding Scholars Program than to employ someone else from outside the federal government). While these new employees are often quite bright and capable, few of them have had extensive training and experience in research. Other recent staff additions have had prior government service, but most of them also have had little training or previous work experience in research and development. As a result, despite continued staff hiring, few of the new employees would be considered well trained, nationally recognized researchers and scholars.

As OERI was restructured in 1994 and early 1995, it was necessary to shift at least some of the existing staff to new positions. Sharon Robinson was committed to giving all employees the opportunity to apply for any position in the agency—even though the reorganization of the office was still underway at that time so that management often did not have an adequate sense of the actual staff needs for each unit.[129] Since approximately 95 percent of the staff were granted their first choice of jobs, some employees ended up in positions where they did not have the necessary experience or technical training to do those jobs.[130] While all OERI staff were strongly urged to enroll in team building and customer service workshops, they did not receive comparable encouragement or opportunities for taking statistical or technical training that might have been particularly helpful in their new positions.[131]

National Research Institutes

The centerpiece of the OERI reauthorization was the creation of the five National Research Institutes. While the proponents of these institutes had envisioned large-scale operations modeled after those in NIH, the actual amount of monies available was rather modest—$43 million for all of them in both FY 1996 and FY 1997 (only about $10 million more than had been spent just on the R&D centers in FY 1995):

Achievement Institute—$12.9 million.
At-Risk Institute—$12.9 million.
Policy Institute—$4.3 million.

Early Childhood Institute—$6.45 million.
Postsecondary Institute—$6.45 million. [132]

The funds appropriated for three of the five National Research Institutes were well below what many of its original supporters had believed was necessary to set up such institutions. Indeed, some supporters of the National Research Institutes suggested that given the small amount of total funding, only the Achievement Institute and the At-Risk Institute should have been created at this time with a larger budget of $21.5 million each.

The legislation mandated the creation of the five National Research Institutes and provided a long list of possible topics that each institute might research—more than could be reasonably accomplished given the limited monies available. After considerable internal and external discussion, OERI developed its own general, but often not very specific, set of priorities for each institute and established at least one center for each institute.

Initially, the 5 National Research Institutes put most of their $43 million into 7 R&D centers (expanded to 11 centers by FY 1997). While the law stated that they had to spend at least one-third on centers, in FY 1997 they spent $31.15 million on them (57.7 percent). The institutes allocated $14.3 million to field-initiated research—26.5 percent of the total institute funds. Only $8.55 million was spent on special studies, crosscutting activities, fellowships, or peer reviews (15.8 percent of the total institute budget). [133] Thus, the expenditures for the five National Research Institutes were more diversified than that of the former Office of Research (OR), which had focused mainly on R&D centers. Yet even now the R&D centers received almost 60 percent of the entire budget.

There have been significant changes in the size of the annual funding for the R&D centers. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the R&D centers' budgets averaged between $3 and $5 million annually (in constant 1996 dollars). Over time, average funding for the centers decreased sharply—in the late 1970s and early 1980s averaging between $2 and $3 million annually (in constant 1996 dollars). With the great expansion in the number of centers in the late 1980s, average annual funding for them became even smaller—reaching a low in FY 1991 of about $1 million (in constant 1996 dollars). [134]

The National Academy of Sciences had recommended in 1992 that the annual funding for all R&D centers should be at least $3 million (or $3.35 million in constant 1996 dollars). [135] Others argued for even more money for R&D centers—perhaps somewhere in the range of $6 to $8 million annually. [136] Given the general consensus that the R&D centers in the early 1990s were much too small and the specific NAS recommendations for at least $3 million minimum, it was somewhat

surprising and quite disappointing that Congress mandated only a $1.5 million annual minimum for these institutions.

While the total funding (in constant 1996 dollars) for the centers remained relatively constant from FY 1992 to FY 1997, the number of them has decreased by more than one half. In FY 1992 there were 22 R&D centers while 5 years later there were only 11 institutions. As a result, the average annual funding (in constant 1996 dollars) of the centers has increased substantially from $1.28 million in FY 1992 to $2.76 million in FY 1997—more than doubling in size.

Looking at the average expenditures is somewhat misleading, as most centers are still very small today. Only 2 of the 11 R&D centers in FY 1997 are well funded annually: the National Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk ($5 million) and the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence ($4 million). But 8 other centers are much smaller at $2.5 to $2.8 million each. Moreover, OERI has just funded another R&D center at only $1.5 million.[137] Given that in the past frequently only half of center funding went directly for research or development expenditures (the rest spent in other areas such as dissemination, administration, and overhead costs), it is likely that serious underfunding is limiting the actual research that can be attempted at these small R&D centers. [138]

It is very important to know how the new R&D centers focus their research and development energies. Unfortunately, there is no in-depth analysis of the number of projects in the new centers or of the actual intellectual cohesiveness among projects within each center. It does appear, however, that many of the new centers include partners at several different colleges and universities—thereby making coordination even more difficult. For example, the new $1.5 million Center on Policy and Teaching Excellence is a consortium including the University of Washington (Seattle), Stanford University, Teachers College at Columbia University as well as faculty at the Universities of Michigan and Pennsylvania. [139]

Based on the original proposal for the National Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk as well as discussions with several OERI staff members familiar with some of the other centers, one might conclude many of the new centers still seem to support too many projects and projects which are too small; and some of these smaller projects which could be closely integrated with each other are not. Moreover, with a few notable exceptions, there is little evidence that most of the new centers are engaged in the systematic, long-term development of educational materials and models—a continued weakness of OERI in general. Instead, the new centers continue the previous practice of focusing almost all of their attention on pursuing basic and applied research or funding dissemination activities.

While annual funding for many of the individual projects within the centers continues to be only $30,000 to $50,000 annually, the size of the field-initiated grants has grown considerably. The Postsecondary Institute, for example, funded six field-initiated studies in FY 1996 that averaged $210,000 annually (the grants covered 2 to 3 years of work). Thus, whereas one of the more attractive features of the center system in principle was that it concentrated more research monies on a few large-scale, long-term projects that might be done through grants to individual scholars, today the situation may be just reversed—many of the field-initiated grants are larger than some of the particular projects within the centers.

The research plans for many of the individual projects in the old R&D center applications were not well developed or clearly articulated. Some of these projects frequently devoted the first year to a review of the secondary literature; afterwards a more careful, detailed design of the subsequent research work was developed. [140] Moreover, center awards often included projects of very mixed quality—some parts excellent and some parts so weak that they probably would not have survived by themselves a rigorous outside peer review.

Successful field-initiated grants, on the other hand, may have more focused and developed research proposals in order to be able to win the more intense competition for individual funding. And as applicants are expected to be aware of the secondary work in the field, there may be less need to devote the first year of the project to reviewing the existing literature before proceeding to their original work. In addition, as most field-initiated grants are for only 2–3 years, they cannot afford the luxury of simply reviewing the secondary literature for the first year before undertaking new research.

Since the center grants focused on a particular problem area, however, it was easier for OERI to target its resources to these sites rather than hold a relatively general and open ended field-initiated grant competition. The centers also provided opportunities for different researchers to work together on a common set of issues and required them to disseminate their findings more broadly than most individual researchers are willing to do.

These obvious and real advantages to the center approach might be duplicated at least in part by using mission-oriented competitions for field-initiated research. That is, OERI might call for research on a particular area, such as summer learning or the education of pregnant adolescents, and then allow researchers to propose their own topics. Following the practice of many other federal research agencies, the institutes could convene the funded individual researchers to exchange ideas amongst themselves. Moreover, the institutes might also synthesize the results from these mission-oriented individual grants and disseminate the

results more widely among other researchers and educational practitioners. In order to administer and intellectually oversee some of these mission-oriented competitions, OERI might hire a leading expert in that substantive area as an excepted service employee for 3–6 years. In any case, the advantages and disadvantages of funding research through individual grants or the existing R&D center system needs further careful evaluation in the near future.

Given that there are now fewer, but somewhat larger centers, one might imagine that there will be even closer integration of them—especially because OERI was directed to develop a coherent, long-term research priority plan to guide all of their investments. Unfortunately, the results in terms of the integration of the centers have been rather disappointing so far. Faced with the slow development of an overall OERI research priority plan, which will be discussed later, the center competition was held well before any coherent research plan had been developed. And rather than working closely together to create an integrated strategy for a new set of centers, each of the five institutes pursued their agendas and interests quite independently of each other. Moreover, the announcement of the competition for the seven centers in the *Federal Register* lacked an overall framework or any coherence, so that the applicants and the reviewers for each of the centers treated them in almost total isolation from each other. The net result is that while the 11 centers may be good individually, they have not been integrated conceptually or operationally with each other. [141]

One factor, which has contributed to the lack of coordination among the five institutes (as well as among the other units within OERI), is that no one is really in charge, organizationally or intellectually, of the overall research agenda. Under the old system, all of the R&D centers were located within the Office of Research, which was headed by Acting Director Joseph Conaty, an experienced and respected researcher. Now each of the institute directors reports directly to the Assistant Secretary who is able to supervise them only minimally; no one is responsible for overseeing intellectually the research operations of the institutes as a whole. While various ad hoc schemes have been tried to improve coordination among the institutes (with occasional success), in practice the system has become even more fragmented. Moreover, the expected close coordination between the work of the institutes and the rest of OERI has not materialized except in a few isolated instances.

Adding to the confusion and lack of research coordination among the five institutes is the fact that OERI itself seems to have less intellectual leadership and direction than 5 years ago. Diane Ravitch had been very interested and involved in the intellectual direction and research agenda of OERI; but Sharon Robinson was less concerned and focused more on translating existing research findings for

the agency's customers. And whereas Vinovskis helped to coordinate OERI research activities as the Research Advisor to the Assistant Secretary, when he left in August 1993, Robinson did not appoint anyone to replace him. Although in principle Robinson endorsed the concept of an OERI Research Advisor on several occasions, that position remained vacant.[142] As a result, during the past 4 years there has been a major vacuum in the overall guidance of intellectual and research activities in OERI—one that has become all the more glaring because of the elimination of the Office of Research and the coordinating and leadership role that some of its directors in the past had played.

In terms of staffing, the five institutes have had mixed experiences. The five acting institute directors were selected from the existing OERI staff and most of them had previous research experience—though few were still personally active as researchers. It was expected that OERI would be able to recruit some outside researchers as permanent directors, but the final competition resulted in the appointment of only one outsider as an OERI institute director.

While the overall OERI staff had been reduced by approximately one-fourth from FY 1992, the staffs of the five institutes in FY 1995 were approximately the same size as they had been in the Office of Research. Over time, however, the number of staff members in these institutes has decreased considerably. In June 1997 there were only 64 institute staff members—a substantial decrease from the 77 staff members present in October 1994 (about a one-sixth reduction).

The five institutes fared relatively well within OERI in terms of having generally competent leadership and a sizable staff, but they still lack an adequate number of trained and distinguished researchers. While some current staff have had graduate training and experience in research, most have not. Nor are there many nationally recognized scholars in the institutes. In addition the distribution of the researchers among the institutes is uneven. For example, until very recently the Early Childhood Institute for several years did not have any experienced researchers on its staff even though its mission called for working closely with the research community. Moreover, several of the other institutes had only two or three researchers—hardly enough for a critical intellectual mass to carry out the research and development functions expected of the institutes. As a result, without the national intellectual leadership originally envisioned for the staff of the institutes the production of high quality research and synthesis has not progressed satisfactorily.

One of the primary objectives for the new institutes was to produce high quality research as well as critical syntheses of secondary works that would be helpful to policymakers and educators. So far, most of the institutes have produced only a few publications—usually directories of researchers and service providers, materi-

als for parents, or limited analyses of isolated issues.[143] Regrettably, the shortage of active researchers in the institutes as well as the current general lack of OERI encouragement of staff to write for scholarly publications means that it may be unrealistic to expect many broad-based analytical studies or syntheses from the institutes in the near future.[144]

Despite the fact that the five National Research Institutes were to be the centerpiece of the new OERI, the agency seems to have relegated them to a secondary role. Despite the modest $43 million appropriations for the institutes for FY 1996, the following year OERI did not ask for any increase in that budget—preferring instead to request an additional $250 million to support a new Technology Literacy Challenge Fund which would be used to integrate computer technology into the classroom.[145] Congress, however, added $16 million for OERI in FY 1997. After considerable debate over how that additional money should be spent, OERI allocated $11 million of those funds for the institutes—most of which has gone for an additional center ($2.0 million), more field-initiated studies ($5.5 million), or special studies ($2.8 million).[146]

As large programs are added to OERI, the agency has often decided to set them apart from the institutes rather than having the institutes supervise the new activities. For example, although the Achievement Institute is concerned with improving the use of technology in the classroom and specializes in developing better tests, OERI decided not to have that Institute oversee the new high priority initiatives in educational technology or testing. Indeed, staff from the institutes are sometimes temporarily reassigned to work on these new projects under the supervision of the newer unit—thus further diminishing the importance and functioning of the National Research Institutes. As a result, one might easily make the argument that in some ways the five institutes now are less important and less central to the mission of OERI than the Office of Research was 5 years ago—a startling reversal of what the Congress and others had intended for the new OERI. Perhaps even more surprising is the fact that the diminishing of the relative role of the institutes within OERI has gone largely unnoticed and uncontested by the educational research community and interested policymakers.

Office of Reform Assistance and Dissemination

Throughout the long history of NIE and OERI, legislators and educators frequently criticized each agency for failing to disseminate research information to classroom teachers. These critics have often exaggerated the availability of reliable and useful research information about educational practices and have seriously underestimated NIE's and OERI's efforts to distribute that knowledge. Indeed, one might argue that NIE and OERI have tried harder and perhaps have

been even more successful than many other federal research agencies in disseminating research information to the public and practitioners. [147]

Prior to the reorganization of OERI in 1994, OERI had been active in improving program development and disseminating the results through its Programs for the Improvement of Practice (PIP). The reauthorization of OERI created the Office of Reform Assistance and Dissemination, which took over most of the functions of PIP. ORAD has four divisions: the state and local Support Division (SLSD), the Knowledge Applications Division (KAD), the Development and Demonstration Programs Division (DDPD), and the Learning Technologies Division (LTD).

Despite the repeated emphasis by policymakers and educators on the importance for ORAD to provide links between research and practice, staffing problems have hampered its operation. Whereas its predecessor, PIP, had 73 employees in 1990, ORAD in March 1997 had only 61 staff members (a one-sixth decrease). Thus, while the Congress and the Clinton Administration envisioned an expanded and improved level of dissemination and reform assistance through ORAD, the restructured operation had substantially fewer employees and lost some of its most effective and experienced managers through early retirement during the buyout period. Even more unsettling and troublesome was the fact that ORAD operated for more than 3 years without a permanent director. Fortunately, Peirce A. Hammond has now been hired as the Director of ORAD.

One of the most important responsibilities of ORAD was to guide and monitor the activities of the regional educational laboratories. There had been considerable controversy surrounding the regional educational laboratories in the past; but some observers were now hopeful that with a new administration a closer and more harmonious relationship might develop between OERI and the labs. [148]

Congress reauthorized the regional educational laboratories along similar lines as in the past, but did provide for the possibility of expanding the number of labs from 10 to 12 (which has not occurred). Following the conceptual scheme also employed in other federal educational legislation in 1994, each laboratory was expected to "promote the implementation of broad-based systemic school improvement strategies." Permissible tasks for the labs were enumerated in a lengthy list—ranging from the development and dissemination of educational research products to providing technical assistance and training for state and local educators. Congress again stated ambiguously who should set the research and development priorities of the labs. On the one hand, the labs were to be governed by their own regional boards. On the other hand, they were to respond to the needs of the federal government as set forth in the 5-year lab contacts and to coordinate their

activities with other units within OERI such as the National Research Institutes and the National Diffusion Network (NDN). [149]

Work on the request for proposals (RFP) for the regional educational laboratories was underway in the second half of 1994 and continued in earnest until it was issued with an August 8, 1995 deadline. Rather than repeating the lengthy list of permissible lab activities, the new RFP called for these institutions to focus most of their resources on supporting broad-based systemic reform efforts, while simultaneously developing a specialized area of expertise. [150]

There were two new goals for the laboratories: (1) to bring together scattered successful reform efforts at the state and local level; and (2) to scale-up the existing successful reforms so that they are adapted by other areas. By the end of the 5-year contract, the laboratories were to have achieved some fairly tangible and ambitious goals. [151]

While harnessing the work of the regional educational laboratories to the Clinton Administration's emphasis on systemic reform was understandable, the conceptual basis for that initiative was problematic from the very beginning. The RFP called for each of the 10 regional laboratories to develop, test, and help implement systemic reforms. It would have been more efficient and effective to have one overall coordinated lab effort to develop and test systemic reform models and processes. Otherwise there was likely to be considerable waste and duplication if several different labs assessed identical reform models such as "Success for All," or developed nearly identical educational improvements without using similar measures or procedures to facilitate more scientifically reliable comparisons.

Nor was there a coherent or clear definition of what "systemic" or "comprehensive" reform meant in the RFP. For example, was "opportunity to learn" an integral and essential component of systemic reform? Was the provision of social services to school children also an essential part of systemic reform? Moreover, there were internal inconsistencies even within the RFP on what these terms meant or how they should have been interpreted in practice. The previous labs had interpreted the concept of systemic reform quite differently amongst themselves and some had even explicitly rejected the idea altogether. While the RFP correctly permitted and encouraged different approaches, this might not necessarily lead to meaningful or useful comparisons at the end of 5 years. If OERI wanted to test or develop several different approaches to systemic reform, this should have been done more explicitly and rigorously, so that the relative merits of using different approaches could be better assessed and compared. Without some overall vision or process for developing a more coherent, planned variation approach (including using some standardized measurement schemes), a considerable amount of money and effort might be wasted or misdirected.

Similarly, what was "scaling-up"? Would each of the labs devise their own definition and strategy? Was OERI especially interested in any particular aspect of scaling-up such as the relative costs and benefits of working in partnership with teachers? Would there be any planned comparisons among these different strategies and approaches? Did we really need 10 different, rather uncoordinated, but expensive efforts to study "scaling-up"—especially from an applied research and development perspective?

Perhaps it might have made more sense analytically to subdivide the core lab activities into two broad categories:

- a applied research and development initiative focused on investigating and assessing systemic reform and scaling-up; and

- a set of services provided to states and local areas to help them implement systemic reform and scaling-up.

Rather than leaving it up to each lab individually to develop and implement its own, separate applied research and development projects on systemic reform and scaling-up, perhaps they should have been required to work with OERI and through the existing lab network to create a more coherent and coordinated effort. Moreover, this would have encouraged closer cooperation between the labs and the Planning and Evaluation Service (PES) in the Department, who were also working on systemic reform and scaling-up. This way OERI would have minimized unnecessary duplications and ensured that major gaps would be identified and filled. Initially the labs would have made their own suggestions and recommendations on how they would like to proceed, but their proposals then would have been reviewed, negotiated, and coordinated.

The second part of the lab core activities—to assist state and local areas to implement systemic reform and scaling-up—could have been handled in a more traditional manner. Each lab would work within its own region to provide the necessary services for its customers at the state and local levels. While some interregional coordination among the labs still might be useful, it is not as essential for this activity as it is when trying to develop new models and processes which are going to be applicable in different contexts throughout the entire nation. [152]

The idea of a more organized and coordinated approach to systemic reform and scaling-up was considered at OERI; some of the staff agreed with the conceptual and practical advantages of such an approach. But given the continued hostility of the labs, who preferred to take directions from their own governing boards and lab management, to following the leadership and guidance of OERI, it was unlikely that this alternate approach would have been adopted—even though it might have

produced more reliable and useful results in the long run. The labs and their allies in Congress insisted that even though these institutions operated under government contracts and received substantial federal funds, they should remain relatively autonomous and almost totally independent of any specific directives from OERI.

The RFP included several other improvements. It mandated periodic evaluations of the labs—including a much needed independent 3-year review of all labs.[153] The required quality assurance system for each of the labs was also expanded and made more rigorous.[154] Another innovative idea was to set aside approximately $200,000 per year for each lab for an optional task 6—providing assistance to OERI. This was intended as a way to allow OERI to provide more direct guidance for a small portion of the labs' activities and to compensate those institutions when they performed special tasks for the agency.[155] Finally, the RFP called for each of the labs to create a specialty area development (task 7)—reflecting their own interests as well as those of OERI. Task 7 was important and accounted for one-fifth of the total points assigned by reviewers in the lab RFP. The idea behind this approach was to encourage each lab to develop an area of expertise that would be shared with others across the nation.[156]

While there were areas in which the lab RFP might have been improved, given the political and practical constraints, overall OERI did a good job and made some useful improvements. Certainly the RFP for 1995 was much better than either of the ones for 1985 or 1990. If the specific requirements and recommendations of the RFP were carried out in practice, the orientation and effectiveness of those institutions would have been improved.

When the NAS Panel analyzed the labs in 1992, it stated that the "committee questions the advisability of competitions for RALs [Regional Assistance Laboratories]. The laboratories competed in 1985 and 1990, and only one of the 19 incumbents was unseated in those 2 rounds of competitive bidding."[157]

In 1995, however, two incumbents were unseated: Research for Better Schools (RBS) was replaced by Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success (LSS); and the Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands (NE/I) lost to Northeast and Islands Laboratory at Brown University (LAB). In addition, Southeastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) was created in 1990. Thus, contrary to the NAS Panel's prediction that there would be almost no changes in the labs through the competitions, there has been a 30 percent turnover over the last 2 competitions. Moreover, there may be a shift in the orientation of some of the labs as the two additions in 1995 are associated with universities.

Not only have three new labs been created, but many of the long-time leaders of the continuing institutions have left. Experienced and influential executive lab directors such as Dean Nafziger (FWL), C.L. Hutchins (McREL), Robert Rath (NWREL), John Hopkins (RBS), and Preston Kronkosky (SEDL) have either retired or been replaced. Indeed, only three of the current executive lab directors were running their institutions before 1990. As a result, the leaders of the regional educational laboratories today are less experienced, but also perhaps more open to instituting changes in the operation of their organizations and reconsidering their relationship to OERI.

Another recent change likely to have a major impact is the resignation of the Executive Director of CEDaR, Dena Stoner, to start her own trade association. While Stoner hopes to continue to work with some of the CEDaR center and lab members in her new post, it is not yet clear what will happen. Moreover, the Department is reexamining and questioning the legality of the previous financial relationship between CEDaR and the labs and centers; this may also lead to a restructuring of that connection in the future. How these recent changes in CEDaR will affect the operation of the labs as a whole or the political influence, which the labs have had with the 105th Congress, and the Clinton Administration remains to be seen.

At the same time that there have been significant changes in lab membership and leadership, there have also been indications that some of their overall goals and practices have remained basically the same. With the Republicans gaining control of Congress after the 1994 elections, some observers anticipated the implementation of more critical oversight of the labs; but lobbyists for the labs have operated almost equally effectively with the new Republican Congress. For example, CEDaR managed to persuade its congressional allies to shift the $10 million saved by eliminating the National Diffusion Network in FY 1996 to the labs. While some have portrayed this change as a temporary transfer, most observers expect that the additional $10 million will become a permanent part of the federal funding of the labs—just as the special monies for the rural initiatives in the late 1980s were incorporated in the regular lab budget over time.

Similarly, despite the apparent support of the labs and CEDaR for the new directions enunciated in the 1995 RFP, once the labs received their new contracts some of them balked at working on projects initiated by OERI (task 6). The OERI staff were caught off guard by the discovery that House and Senate appropriations committees had been persuaded to repudiate the explicit terms of the 1995 lab contracts. Congress in its appropriations reports insisted that all of the work of the labs should be based only on the priorities established through their own regional governing boards. [158]

Besides working with the regional educational laboratories, ORAD was also charged with identifying promising educational models, developing and testing them in different settings, and then disseminating that information. Unfortunately, the Department in general and NIE or OERI in particular, have failed to develop and rigorous test educational models in the past. As Robert Slavin recently put it:

> For decades, policymakers have complained that the federal education research and development enterprise has had too little impact on the practice of education. With few notable exceptions, this perception is, I believe, largely correct. Federally funded educational R&D has done a good job of producing information to inform educational practice, but has created few well validated programs or practices that have entered widespread use. [159]

OERI has done little to support the systematic and rigorous testing of alternative educational models. Instead, it has spent most of its monies on a series of small, short-term projects (including much of those funded through the labs and centers). While OERI in mid-1994 had received and approved a plan for a large-scale, rigorous evaluation of systemic reform, it failed to develop and implement that proposal. [160]

As a result, when the Clinton Administration focused on assessing the strengths and weaknesses of systemic reform, it relied more heavily on the work of the Planning and Evaluation Service in the Department, especially its recently funded Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance. OERI has played a very minor role in these discussions—in part because the agency itself was not really undertaking any large, scientifically rigorous studies of systemic reform. Thus, ironically, whereas OERI might have been one of the leaders in the efforts to critically assess systemic reform in mid-1994, it failed to take advantage of that opportunity and encouraged the Department to look elsewhere for intellectual leadership and assistance on how to assess the impact of systemic reform.

National Center for Education Statistics

During the OERI reauthorization process, the Congress did not devote as much attention to NCES as to other divisions within the proposed new agency such as the National Research Institutes and the Office of Reform Assistance and Dissemination. The National Center for Education Statistics continued to be seen as the primary federal agency for collecting domestic and international educational data. [161]

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) was divided into four units: the Statistical Standards and Methodology Division; the Data Development Division; Education Surveys Division; and the Education Assessment Division. NCES also made effective use of advisory groups—including two key ones which were legislatively mandated: the Advisory Council on Education Statistics (ACES), which helped the Commissioner with general policies and operating standards; and the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which oversaw the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).

During the decade that NCES had made such important and meaningful improvements, it also faced some serious challenges. Perhaps one of foremost was the decision of Emerson Elliott to retire at the end of his term as the first presidential appointed Commissioner of Education Statistics. As we discussed earlier, Elliott was one of the most experienced and effective career federal civil service managers and played an instrumental role in developing NCES into a first-rate statistical agency. Pascal (Pat) Forgione, Jr., the former Delaware State School Superintendent, was a good choice to replace him on July 1, 1996.[162] But Forgione understandably is relatively inexperienced and does not yet have the extensive network of contacts Elliott had built up during his three decades in the federal government. Nor does he have a close working relationship with many of the OERI leaders and middle-level staff that Elliott had developed over the years. On the other hand, Forgione appears to be very knowledgeable and interested in improving the technical aspects of the NCES work.

Another troublesome problem for NCES was the unexpected, dramatic decline in staff size. When the NAS Panel called for a doubling of the size of the NCES staff, the agency had about 143 employees in 1991. By October 1994 NCES had decreased to 112 and by March 1997 it was still only 115—an overall decrease of nearly one-fifth. Thanks to the open enrollment season in September 1994 as well as the buyout program for senior staff, NCES lost some technically skilled and experienced employees. Recently some of the more competent NCES staff have left the unit to work elsewhere in OERI or in other parts of the federal government—partly in reaction to recent changes at NCES.

The general de-skilling of the rest of the OERI research staff also meant that it is now more difficult to recruit NCES staff from elsewhere in the agency—an important source of recruitment in the past. OERI has temporarily "borrowed" a few of the more accomplished NCES professionals to work on high priority projects such as the new voluntary national education testing initiative.[163] And while the new Education Statistics Services Institute provided help on some of the more technical aspects of the work, it also created additional problems and increased staff tensions that have yet to be resolved. Thus, Commissioner Forgione

was faced with having to satisfy the increased mandated tasks for NCES with a staff that recently has been considerably diminished and weakened.

As the expectations and responsibilities for NCES expanded substantially in recent years, increased funding for those activities has not been adequately provided. NCES funding rose dramatically from $19.5 million in FY 1987 to $85.5 million in FY 1993 (in constant 1996 dollars). But since then funding has actually decreased to $80.6 million in FY 1997 (in constant 1996 dollars)—a 5.7 percent decrease. As a result, NCES's more ambitious data collection and dissemination agenda has had to be implemented by a smaller staff with fewer real dollars.

Despite these new challenges, NCES has managed to increase the diversity and usefulness of its publications for multiple audiences while producing a high quality work. It is interesting to observe that when Assistant Secretary Robinson testified before Congress, most of the OERI publications she distributed to the members were from NCES rather than from the National Research Institutes or ORAD. At a time when the other units within OERI are having great difficulty in doing either original research or critical syntheses of existing scholarship, NCES continues to make significant contributions not only to the collection of data, but to its analysis as well.

NCES also has made some key improvements redesigning the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Congress mandated NAEP in 1969 and national tests at grades 4, 8, and 12 have been administered for 10 different subjects. In 1990 some NAEP tests were also administered and released at the state level and this component has expanded rapidly. In 1996, 44 states voluntarily participated in the NAEP math assessment at grades 4 and 8 and in the science assessment at grade 8.[164] Moreover, the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) has called for even more linkage of the NAEP tests to state and local needs. [165]

Following up on this suggestion, NAGB announced, in March 1997, a tentative national and state schedule for the NAEP tests until the year 2010. The national tests in the 10 subjects would continue periodically, but they would be supplemented by state tests in reading and writing or mathematics and science every 2 years.[166] In order to expand the number and type of tests and yet stay within the existing budget, NCES is considering alternative ways of redesigning and administering the tests in order to save money. [167]

While NCES is doing a good job in providing new and expanded coverage of subjects like reading, writing, mathematics, and science at the state level, it is neglecting other important areas like social studies. For example, national U.S. history or geography NAEP exams are scheduled only for 2001 and 2009 and the

civics exams in 1998 and 2003; the world history exam will only be given only in 2005. Moreover, none of the social studies subjects are now scheduled to be included in any of the NAEP state assessments. [168]

The neglect of social studies is not unique to NCES. The Department of Education in its plans for national tests as well as its evaluation of the Title I program, has focused almost exclusively on reading and mathematics assessments. While the Congress and the Clinton Administration frequently have evoked the importance of improved K–12 education for good citizenship, in fact they have not provided much leadership or guidance in this area. Most of the public and policymakers appear to be unaware of this rather narrow definition of the subjects to be assessed; nor have professional social studies organizations protested the relative neglect of social studies. [169]

NAEP could also be improved by providing better information on the economic status of the students being tested. For example, the 1994 U.S. history scores were reported by the race and ethnicity of the students, but not by the income of their parents. One-half of white students, 83 percent of black pupils and 78 percent of Hispanic students in the 12th grade performed below the basic level. [170] Yet undoubtedly some of these racial and ethnic differences in knowledge of American history reflected the difficulties low-income students may have had in doing as well as their more fortunate middle-class counterparts.[171] From reports based on race and ethnicity, but not on the economic status of the family, policymakers and the public have received a rather limited and misleading impression of the basic factors which help to explain the differential performance of elementary and secondary school students on the national history test.

NAEP has plans to ascertain whether or not a tested student participates in the subsidized food lunch program in order to get some indication of poverty status. Unfortunately, this is not a very reliable index and needs to be supplemented or replaced by better indicators. Naturally, it is difficult to acquire valid measures of parental income from elementary students. Efforts should be made to experiment with alternative ways to retrieve that information (perhaps from a more in-depth questionnaire to a sample of the parents, or from student school records, which may have information on parental characteristics). Rough estimates of parental income might be asked of 12th-grade students as they may know the approximate income of their families. In any case, NCES and NAGB need to devote more attention to finding more appropriate indicators of the economic well being of the parents of the students.

Another useful, but potentially difficult new direction at NCES is to expand its work in policy analysis. NCES has always been involved in doing policy analy-

ses, but the agency has been reluctant to expand too far in this area as it feared compromising its independence and objectivity by being too closely identified with a controversial policy or a particular administration.

As NCES expands the use of NAEP data to the state level and works more closely with state and local officials, support for that agency probably will grow as the usefulness of its work becomes more apparent. At the same time, however, there are hidden dangers in this new approach. Political leaders may express dissatisfaction with the state NAEP results if they should happen to contradict the often more optimistic findings from a state's own educational assessments. Policymakers also want results from the NAEP tests to be processed more quickly and presented in less technical language—putting more pressure on NCES to work faster and create additional, less complicated reports. And working more closely with state and local educational policymakers may necessitate providing those officials with additional training and assistance. None of these problems is insurmountable, but each will require additional NCES staff and resources, which are increasingly in short supply at the agency. Finally, will doing these more expensive, policy-oriented investigations drain scarce resources from the other more basic and traditional NCES data collections and statistical studies?

As NCES undertakes more policy analyses, it will also necessitate using more complex statistical techniques to ascertain the relative impact of different factors. While NCES has done a relatively good job of collecting data and accurately reporting them, the agency has been quite backward in using more sophisticated statistical methods of analysis. Most NCES studies still rely almost exclusively on a simple cross tabulation of the data. Only recently have a few of the NCES analyses even employed multivariate statistics and more complex modeling techniques.[172] And few NCES studies do an adequate job of reviewing and critically interacting with the secondary literature on the topics they are addressing.

As NCES moves toward more sophisticated and complex policy analyses, it will face many additional challenges. Will NCES be able to hire more staff with the needed substantive knowledge? Right now its technical research staff can go from one project to another rather easily because they are not necessarily expected to be experts in any particular subject area. But requiring staff to have substantive as well as statistical expertise not only increases the costs of hiring such individuals, but limits the number of different areas which anyone can be reasonably expected to cover. Similarly, will NCES have to create additional advisory panels, which have a more substantive orientation in order to help oversee this new work? While ideally NCES would work closely with the OERI National Research Institutes to obtain some of that substantive expertise, unfortunately the shortage of first-rate researchers in those units reduces the likelihood of receiving too much help from these organizations. Thus, as NCES moves more into substantive and

policy analyses, its staffing and organizational structure will need to be reassessed and perhaps more coordinated with related developments in other OERI programs than in the past.

Finally, as NCES moves more into policy-oriented work, it will face criticisms from those who may disagree with the particular initiatives. For example, the Clinton Administration has been pushing actively for developing voluntary national tests for reading and mathematics. While this initiative has attracted considerable political support, it has also raised significant opposition. OERI has been assigned the task of overseeing the development of these tests and has relied heavily for assistance upon some prominent NCES staff members. Will critics of the tests someday attack NCES for becoming too involved in specific Administration policies? Will these same critics try to withhold additional discretionary funding from NCES for fear that these monies will be spent on projects which they deem are too partisan or one sided?

The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board and the OERI Research Plan

As we have seen, protracted controversy over the characteristics and power of the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB) delayed the reauthorization of OERI by almost 2 years. Yet the NERPPB was seen as so important by some members of Congress that they felt it was worth the delay to ensure that a powerful and active OERI policy board was created. The final compromise created a strong advisory board, but the actual role the board would play in the agency depended to a large degree on who was to be appointed to that group and how they would relate to OERI in practice.

Given the centrality of the policy board in the legislation as well as the planned major restructuring of OERI, it was disappointing that the Department moved so slowly to appoint the Board. The legislation mandated that the Board had to meet by May 15, 1995, but Assistant Secretary Robinson had hoped to have it appointed by November 1994.[173] Finally, on February 27, 1995 Secretary of Education Richard Riley named 15 members from over 300 nominees to the new National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board. As mandated by Congress, five of the appointees had extensive experiences in elementary and secondary education.[174] Another five were selected for their broad educational expertise and background.[175] And five were education researchers who had been nominated by the National Academy of Sciences.[176] Many of the key educational lobbyists were quite enthusiastic about the quality of the appointments to NERPPB.[177]

The Board held their first meeting on March 30–31, 1995. Members of the Board worked well together and demonstrated a healthy respect for the varied goals of

OERI and their own diverse backgrounds. Kenji Hakuta, representing the research community, and John T. Sanders, reflecting the broader educational orientation of the Board, were unanimously elected co-chairs. The Board also created four ad hoc subcommittees: (1) Research Priorities, (2) Regional Educational Laboratories, (3) Standards, and (4) Research and Development Centers. [178]

Some critics of the NERPPB had been concerned about the quality of the interactions between the Board and OERI. But thanks in large part to the openness and personal effectiveness of Assistant Secretary Robinson as well as the full cooperation of the members of the Board, a close and harmonious working relationship quickly developed between the two groups. John Christensen, a high-level, senior OERI professional, initially was designated as the federal liaison to the board and played a key role in facilitating NERPPB activities. Eve Bither, a former high school physics teacher, school administrator, and state school superintendent as well as the acting Director of ORAD, was selected by the Board to be their Executive Director in June 1996.[179] Bither's extensive experiences in state and federal educational affairs as well as her ability to work effectively with diverse interest groups has helped to maintain a close and cordial working relationship between OERI and the Board.

Perhaps the primary responsibility for NERPPB was to work with OERI to develop a 5-year research priority plan for the agency. Unfortunately, much of the anticipated expenditures for OERI for the next 5 years had already been planned and almost fully committed before the Board was even appointed. For example, although several of the Board members at their first meeting raised questions about the wisdom of allocating so much of OERI's funds to the labs and centers, they did not have adequate time to investigate and discuss these issues as the announcements for the competitions for these two sets of institutions were due in the next couple of months.[180] Board members also were disappointed to learn that OERI had not yet developed a preliminary long-range research plan even though much of the agency's monies for the next 5 years was already being committed. The lack of an overall OERI research plan was surprising because the agency had been periodically working on one for the past 3 years.

The legislation mandated that by October 1, 1995, OERI and NERPPB publish a report specifying the agency's research priorities for the next 5 years. Yet as we have seen, NERPPB met for the first time in March 1995 and only then began to think about a research priority plan. Under these circumstances OERI and NERPPB decided to publish a general research framework as an interim product by October and then use the following year to provide a more specific and detailed future research proposals.

The newly created OERI Research Priorities Planning Team presented NERPPB with a set of alternatives and recommendations on a series of important issues in June 1995. One important question the OERI Planning Team addressed was whether there should be an overarching framework or perspective for the plan. [181] The Research Priorities Planning Team recommended, and NERPPB in essence accepted, the idea that there would be no overall framework for the 5-year research plan. Instead, OERI developed future research plans, which were relatively separate for each of the agency's units.

The decision not to try to develop an overall framework was unfortunate because it continued to leave OERI's operations fragmented and uncoordinated at a time when many policymakers had hoped to focus the agency's resources on a few, major initiatives. An alternative approach had been proposed and almost accepted by OERI in early 1995. In his OERI commissioned essay, Vinovskis developed a life course perspective that elicited considerable interest within the agency. The proposed life course framework offered a more dynamic and yet comprehensive approach and emphasized focusing reform efforts on the more crucial transitions in the lives of children. [182]

The life course framework was discussed widely within OERI and endorsed by many of the staff. No alternative comprehensive frameworks emerged during those meetings to challenge this approach. And aspects of the life course approach were even adopted by some units in their own planning. But ultimately the lack of overall intellectual leadership at OERI meant that most programs continued to pursue their own interests and orientation without trying to fit their work within any larger overall context.

After 18 months of drafting and crafting, the 5-year research priorities plan for education research was released jointly by OERI and the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB) in December 1996. The 112-page plan, *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners,* was colorfully illustrated, beautifully published, and widely distributed. The report listed seven national priorities for research in education:

1. Improving learning and development in early childhood so that children can enter kindergarten prepared to learn and succeed in elementary and secondary schools.

2. Improving curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student learning at all levels of education to promote high academic achievement, problem-solving abilities, creativity, and the motivation for further learning.

3. Ensuring effective teaching by expanding the supply of potential teachers, improving teacher preparation, and promoting career long professional development at all levels of education.

4. Strengthening schools, particularly middle and high schools, as institutions capable of engaging young people as active and responsible learners.

5. Supporting schools to effectively prepare diverse populations to meet high standards for knowledge, skills, and productivity, and to participate fully in American economic, cultural, social, and civic life.

6. Promoting learning in informal and formal settings, and building the connections that cause out-of-school experiences to contribute to in-school achievement.

7. Understanding the changing requirements for adult competence in civic, work, and social contexts and how these requirements affect learning and the futures of individuals in the nation. [183]

While the seven national education research priorities are well stated and at times perhaps even inspirational, they are often so general as to offer little specific guidance on where scarce research funds and energies should be focused. For example, no one could disagree with the second priority, which calls for "improving curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student learning at all levels of education." But this declaration does not provide any suggestions for which subjects or at what levels of education efforts should be focused to help children learn better. Nor does the report summarize effectively what is known about this entire area from a research perspective or what specific research gaps should be addressed in the next 5 or 10 years. Moreover, the report acknowledged that "[i]n setting this agenda, the Assistant Secretary and the Board refrained from ranking the priorities." [184]

When the priorities do provide some general guidance and direction, as in the emphasis on early childhood education (priority number 1) and middle and high schools (priority number 4), it is not clear why these three levels of education were selected for special attention while others were ignored. For example, many scholars and studies have suggested that K–3 education is a particularly important period of education for helping disadvantaged children. Indeed, OERI's continued assistance in the development of "Success for All" has pointed out the importance of these grades in helping at-risk children.[185] Yet the National Priorities for Research in Education seemingly slighted K–3 education without explaining to the reader why. Was it because they thought that improving prekindergarten

education and reforming middle and high schools had a larger impact on students than helping K–3 education? Or did they think we already know enough about K–3 education so that we do not need any more research in this area? And if K–3 education is not one of the highest priorities for OERI, why does the agency continue to fund "Success for All"?

Research priority number 6 focuses appropriately on the contribution of out-of-school learning experiences for the development of the child. Certainly this is one of the more crucial areas for further research as studies have pointed to the importance of learning outside the classroom. But in the report's discussion of this topic, the focus is mainly on extracurricular activities, after-school opportunities, and parental involvement in school programs.[186] No mention is made of the potential importance of summer learning and the problems that at-risk children have during this period—even though the existing research suggests that this might be one of the most important factors in explaining the relative disadvantage of learning for children from low-income families.[187] Thus, a reader might wonder just how carefully and comprehensively the existing research was consulted and incorporated in making these specific recommendations.

One also wonders about the general tone of the report. Sometimes it appeared to be too complacent about the quality and quantity of existing research.[188] And while the report stressed the need for improvements in the future, its defense of school achievements in the past quarter of a century seems somewhat strained and exaggerated.[189] Moreover, while the report generally did a good job of emphasizing the problems that many minority students face today, surprisingly it often seemed to ignore or downplay the negative impact of poverty on all children.[190]

Overall, while the National Priorities for Research in Education was clearly written and handsomely produced, it does not yet provide a very useful set of guidelines or suggestions for educational research for the next 5- or 10-years. Many of the OERI staff privately acknowledges that *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners* has not had much of an impact even within the agency. In a recent *OERI Bulletin*, for example, Ramon Cortines, then acting Assistant Secretary, listed seven priorities of the Department without even mentioning the existence of the new OERI research priorities.[191] And there was little evidence that those in other units of the Department or outside the federal government have paid close attention to its recommendations. While some of the responsibility for the shortcomings of the OERI research plan must rest with NERPPB, most of it belongs to OERI, which has had so much difficulty in developing and implementing any sustained, in-depth intellectual agenda.

Development of Quality Standards for OERI Work

One of the more interesting and useful provisions of the legislation reauthorizing OERI in 1994 was the requirement to establish high standards of professional excellence for its research, development, and dissemination products and activities. The close cooperation of OERI and NERPPB in drafting these regulations also reveals how both organizations have made a very important, but as yet little noticed contribution to improving the quality of the research, development, and statistics sponsored and overseen by the federal government. [192]

The legislation specified three phases for the development and implementation of the standards for the conduct and the evaluation of research. The first phase was to be completed within the first year and specified that the process by which grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements should be peer reviewed and awarded.[193] By the end of the second year, standards were to be drawn up for the exemplary and promising practice programs. [194] Finally, by the conclusion of the third year, the Assistant Secretary would develop standards to periodically evaluate the performance of all OERI funded activities. [195]

OERI has almost completed the first two phases of creating standards and overall the agency has done a good job. The phase one standards are related to those in phase three. The phase one standards are broad and cover all new grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts; they are the beginning points for all projects eventually funded by OERI. [196] While the proposed phase two standards are thoughtful and quite important, they focus almost exclusively on the special exemplary and promising practice programs. [197]

The phase one standards provide the procedures and guidelines for the evaluation of applications for grants, cooperative agreements, and proposals for contracts. As intended by the Congress, the activities covered by the standards are broad and seemingly all inclusive. One major ambiguity, which is not specifically addressed in the document, is whether the work of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is covered by these standards. On the one hand, it does not appear that the Congress explicitly exempted the work of NCES from these standards. On the other hand, NCES frequently has its own regulations—often more scientifically rigorous than those employed in some of the other OERI units.

Assistant Secretary Robinson decided as a policy matter that the phase one standards should be applied to all OERI programs. Secretary of Education Riley then extended the phase one standards to all of the Department's activities. The policy decision to apply these standards broadly was commendable and seems to have been useful in practice.

Implementing phase one and two of the standards was not overly onerous because the tasks were more easily defined and logistically manageable. For example, rather than having to list all of the different sets of criteria for every possible type of grant competition, the phase one standards simply provided a menu of criteria to chose from and permitted flexibility in assigning weights to them. Since the criteria and assigned weights for any competition were available ahead of time, both the applicants and the reviewers had a clear idea of what was expected of them. It was also reasonable to expect to find a sufficient number of qualified outside peer reviewers since there were only a few applicants for each of the large-scale grants and the smaller ones were shorter in length and less detailed (hence requiring less time from reviewers). Moreover, applicants for funding of less than $100,000 were not required to be reviewed by peers.

The situation in regard to the phase three standards is somewhat different and much more daunting in scale and scope. All grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts are to receive both an interim and a final evaluation (not just those over $100,000). Given the great diversity of OERI projects, both in terms of the scale and type of activity, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to provide adequate criteria in the regulations without either resorting to a menu approach or allowing greater specificity by subdividing activities by the type of recipient or the type of product produced. If one decides to depend heavily upon outside peer reviewers, it may be difficult to recruit and compensate sufficient numbers of qualified individuals. As a result, before drafting the final phase three standards, OERI should develop an overall evaluation plan, which ensures that all of its research, development, and dissemination funded activities will be assessed adequately and efficiently.

OERI's overall process for developing the phase three standards also needs some review. The OERI staff and NERPPB generally have done a good job of raising important issues such as the development of an OERI quality assurance system in order to extend the 5-year center cooperative agreements without recompetition. They have also succeeded in soliciting the views of some of the individuals representing the interests of the centers and labs.[198]

But surprisingly little, if any, attention has been paid to the difficult problems involved in OERI creating its own system for monitoring and evaluating all of its programs and activities. By separating in practice the drafting of the phase three standards from the development of program oversight procedures and practices, OERI and NERPPB may have inadvertently missed an important opportunity to investigate and resolve the difficult problems inherent in the creation of a viable quality assurance system. Have OERI and the Board analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the agency's past monitoring and program evaluation practices? Why has the NCES review system seemed to work better than those developed for

the labs and centers? Have the OERI and the Board explored the particular quality control problems that are believed to have plagued educational research and have they discussed how this might affect the phase three standards? In addition to hearing from representatives of the major institutions funded by OERI, will the Committee on Standards be hearing from some of the critics who have questioned the quality of much of NIE/OERI's work over the past 25 years? Thus, while OERI staff and NERPPB have made a good beginning in drafting the phase three standards, they also need to address further some of these broader, related questions.

Finally, it is important that, as much as possible, efforts should be made to develop and rely in part upon the quality assurance systems developed by the grantees and contractors themselves (with the guidance, assistance, and oversight of OERI). These self-evaluation systems then can be periodically assessed to ensure their viability and usefulness and thereby greatly reduce the cost and logistical problems involved in trying to create an overall quality assurance system. Otherwise, the cost and reporting burden of the phase three standards may become too high to ensure their full development and implementation. Moreover, as the phase three standards are developed they should also be linked to the collection and synthesizing of information from the OERI funded recipients. After all, the ultimate goal of trying to develop high quality research, development, and dissemination is to use it substantively and effectively in improving American education today.

Recent Developments at OERI

During the past year there have been some developments at OERI that have raised concerns among its supporters. Sharon Robinson resigned as the Assistant Secretary after 31/2 years in office—one of longest terms of any head of NIE or OERI in the past 25 years. After this lengthy period of stability in leadership, OERI seems to have reverted to the troublesome practice of numerous, short-term assistant secretaries. For almost a year after Robinson had left, the White House had not nominated a successor (and her decision to leave was communicated to the Administration even earlier).[199] Instead, OERI has had three acting assistant secretaries—Marshall "Mike" Smith, the Acting Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education; Ray Cortines, the former Superintendent of New York City and San Diego schools and a special consultant to the U.S. Department of Education; and now Ricky Takai, a professional staff member of the Planning Evaluation Service (PES) in the Department. Kent McGuire, a program officer at the PEW Charitable Trusts K–12 education reform and restructuring program, was nominated in late October 1997 to be the next OERI Assistant Secretary.[200] Unfortunately, the nomination occurred so late in the legislative session that the

Senate did not act on his confirmation until June 1998. Thus, in little under two years, OERI has already had five different assistant secretaries—the greatest number of changes ever in annual leadership in NIE or OERI.

In addition to the lack of continuity due to the ever-changing leadership, there is growing concern that OERI may be losing some of its long sought independence and distance from policies and directives of any particular administration or Congress. Usually someone from within NIE or OERI has been chosen to serve as the acting assistant secretary as the White House nominates an individual for that permanent position. Yet the Clinton Administration now seemed to many observers have selected acting assistant secretaries who are closely identified with the top political leadership of the U.S. Department of Education. The implicit and troubling message also is that no one at OERI was qualified to serve even temporarily as the acting assistant secretary of the agency.

Concerns about the increasing use of OERI by the Clinton Administration to support its more immediate educational agenda have been fueled by the controversial decision to have the agency develop and oversee the voluntary individual national tests in fourth-grade reading and eighth-grade math using OERI staff and discretionary funds. Many Republican and Democratic members of the House of Representatives have denounced the proposed national tests and are insisting that any such major educational undertaking should be first discussed and then authorized by the Congress before the Administration proceeds further on this matter. Representative Bill Goodling (Republican-Pennsylvania), Chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and an ardent opponent of the tests, stated that "[i]t's probably the most controversial issue to come before Congress this year." [201] Fortunately, it now appears that the Administration and the Congress have reached at least a temporary compromise on the national testing issue which appears to have removed OERI from the direct development and supervision of that highly controversial undertaking. [202]

Another Congressman's question about the national tests revealed an interesting new perspective on the responsibilities of the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board. Representative Jay Dickey (Republican-Arkansas), in an appropriations hearing on March 1997, asked Acting OERI Assistant Secretary Smith about the decision to use the discretionary monies from OERI's Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE) for developing the national tests. Dickey wanted to know if NERPPB had "deliberated on the priority and included it in their plan." [203] Smith acknowledged that it was not part of the OERI research priority plan, but pointed out that the Administration had made a quick decision to go ahead with the proposal before the Board had an opportunity to meet and discuss it. Moreover, Smith went on to indicate that according to his interpretation of NERPPB's responsibilities, the Board did not have jurisdiction in this area:

> the Priorities Board is a research board. The Fund for the Improvement of Education is not in the research side of the agency. Think about OERI having three sides, one's a research side, one's a side that does development and dissemination, and then there's the statistics side. It is in the development and dissemination side of the agency.
>
> And the Fund itself gives broad authority to the Secretary, in effect, to carry out activities, a wide range of activities, to improve the quality of education. [204]

Upon further questioning, Smith indicated that the Secretary had the power to spend these discretionary funds "without referral to the board," but promised to look further into that matter. [205]

The debate over the funds for developing the national tests revealed that the leadership of the Department had a rather limited view of the powers of the new Board—apparently seeing its role as mainly to oversee only the research side of the OERI and not its development, dissemination, and statistical functions. This interpretation seems at odds with the general tenor of earlier congressional discussions of the proposed policy board and contrary to the spirit of how Assistant Secretary Robinson had treated the NERPPB. Whatever the actual legal resolution to this important question, it may signal a possible shift in the nature of the future relationship between OERI and the Board as new assistant secretaries are appointed.

Finally, the recent heavy emphasis of OERI management on developing and implementing the voluntary national reading and math tests as well as other new initiatives like the expansion of educational technology has also raised some questions about the overall priorities within the agency. Some of the staff fear that the more traditional research, development, and statistical activities in the National Research Institutes, ORAD, and NCES might be further slighted as the attention of the new leaders becomes focused on the more pressing, immediate needs of the Department.

These recent developments involving the lack of stable leadership at OERI, the reduction in the relative independence of the agency from specific administration or congressional policy initiatives, and the overall setting and implementing of OERI's research and development priorities threaten to hurt the agency in the long run. Clearly there is a need now for a distinguished educator and researcher to be the next assistant secretary who will provide the intellectual leadership necessary to enable the agency to help all children thrive in our schools and society. And steps should be taken to protect the scientific integrity and relative political independence of OERI lest the agency unintentionally and unnecessarily again become viewed as being too politicized.

VIII. Concluding Observations

The federal government has been collecting, analyzing and disseminating educational statistics for more than 130 years. Over time the focus has shifted from data gathering to emphasis on research and development in order to find more effective ways of educating children at the state and local levels. In the 20th century, however, work on educational research and development usually has not been held in high esteem by most academics and policymakers.

Policymakers have often downplayed the value of supporting long-term research and development compared with providing immediate and direct assistance to local schools. When the sciences and other social sciences were called upon to increase their contributions during World War II, the Office of Education actually scaled back its support of educational research and development. On the other hand, as it became increasingly evident in the mid-1960s that we lacked adequate knowledge about how to improve the schooling of at-risk children, the Johnson Administration and the Congress called for more investments in long-term educational research and development.

The need for federal involvement in educational research, development, and statistics is even greater today. Analysts and policymakers are slowly and reluctantly acknowledging that many of the basic federal compensatory education programs established in the 1960s are not as effective as we had hoped. Large-scale, popular federal educational initiatives such as Title I and Head Start probably do offer some assistance for many disadvantaged students, but the early gains do not last; and the short-term successes which often make them appealing to the public and to legislators are not enough to help those in need. Many of these federal initiatives are really only general funding mechanisms rather than specific programs capable of helping children who live in more impoverished homes and neighborhoods to close the academic gap with their more fortunate counterparts. Nor do we possess sufficiently detailed and reliable statistical information about our schools to help educators formulate better policy alternatives. As a result, there is a growing awareness of the need for better educational research, development, and statistics before we can really improve education and schooling for everyone.

If there has been widespread agreement on the need for federal involvement in educational research, there has been less of a consensus on where that effort

should be located within the bureaucracy. Mid-nineteenth-century educational reformers wanted a separate cabinet level department of education to signal the importance of a federal role in schooling. Congress did establish a separate Bureau of Education, but deliberately restricted its responsibilities in practice to gathering, analyzing, and distributing data on schooling. In the process the Congress seemingly emphasized the importance and bureaucratic autonomy of the federal government's statistical and research activities.

As the Bureau of Education acquired new responsibilities in the early 20th century, the statistical and research activities gradually received less internal attention and support. Indeed, calls for enhancing federal involvement in education often justified themselves by citing the importance of gathering educational data; but once the broader federal involvement was attained, the statistical activities in practice were usually downplayed.

As the Office of Education grew rapidly in the 1960s, there was a growing fear that the statistical and research functions of the agency were being neglected and mismanaged. As a result, a separate National Institute of Education was created to provide more visibility and coherence for educational research in the early 1970s. Unfortunately, strong congressional hostility to NIE in general and to one of its early directors in particular prevented the agency from fully capitalizing on the benefits of its new independent status.

When the U.S. Department of Education was created at the end of the 1970s, NIE was placed into a new Office of Educational Research and Improvement and lost much of its previous autonomy and visibility. The OERI reorganization in 1985 further diminished the role of researchers and scholars within the agency as the remnants of NIE became even further submerged within the larger organization. Starting in FY 1989 the transfer of many new, but less research-oriented programs to OERI meant that the overall budget and focus of the agency shifted still further away from the original NIE concentration on research and development. Despite major increases in OERI funding and staffing during the Bush Administration, Diane Ravitch was correct to lament the lack of first-rate researchers in the agency. And the loss of 25 percent of the OERI staff in the past 4 years has only exacerbated the situation.

Given OERI's limited research and development capabilities and disappointing achievements, perhaps it is time to reconsider the organizational location of the agency. Should OERI and its rapidly increasing number of programs be maintained as they currently exist? Congress has strongly recommended that U.S. Department of Education should consolidate even more of its research and evaluation functions into OERI. Is this a good idea and if it were to be done, will the

appropriate staff positions and funds be transferred as well? Should OERI concentrate its attention on research, development, and statistics by shedding some of its recently acquired, but less research-related program activities? Or should the more research-oriented components of OERI be merged with some other federal agency such as the National Science Foundation and the more statistically-oriented parts incorporated into another unit such as the Bureau of the Census? Naturally, there is no easy or ideal answer to this difficult but fundamental question. Yet by asking it, we may encourage policymakers in Congress and administrators in the Department to clarifying OERI's future mission and direction.

The lack of adequate federal support for research, development, and statistics has been repeatedly criticized by educators and researchers. Given the unusually broad and ambitious agenda expected of NIE/OERI, this is a legitimate complaint. Much more money has been available for research and development in medicine and science than in education. Even compared with the other behavioral and social sciences, funding for educational research and development has trailed badly.

Most educators and policymakers do not have a high regard for educational research and development. Many of them think that we already know what needs to be done to improve schooling. If anything, they feel that we should simply expand the dissemination of the results from our "treasure chest" of earlier work. Others are more supportive of the need for additional research and development, but have a low opinion of the quality and relevance of much of the previous work. This lack of enthusiasm for research and development is compounded by the fact that even many sympathetic educators and policymakers have considerable difficulty in citing examples of past successes despite three decades of effort in this area.

The problem of limited funding is exacerbated by a lack of focus and commitment to long-term research and development. Members of Congress and educators attacked first NIE and now OERI for a lack of relevance in the educational research and development being produced; they forced the agency to devote such a large percentage of its scarce resources to dissemination that too little was left for serious research and development. Yet the increasing attention to dissemination in the late 1970s and early 1980s was not sufficient to protect NIE/OERI from the unusually severe reductions in the agency's funding during the Reagan years. As a result the function of OERI often has defaulted to distributing information about plausible, but poorly researched and largely untested ideas and practices.

While monies available for research, development, and statistics have been limited, Congress has also hampered the ability of NIE or OERI to spend it effi-

ciently and effectively. Rather than allowing the agency to decide how to distribute its resources to achieve the general goals set forth by the legislators, a few members of Congress allied with some of the largest beneficiaries of those federal contracts, have since the mid-1970s increasingly mandated how federal educational research and development funds must be spent. While Congress certainly has the responsibility to set the general policy goals for federal research and development activities, some of their efforts to micromanage NIE/OERI have been counterproductive for the nation as a whole—especially since Congress has not been able to undertake the type or quality of oversight of these activities commensurate with its more specific legislative intrusions. Particularly problematic is the all too frequent practice of inserting into congressional report language, at the last moment, major policy directives, which have not been given adequate consideration through the regular authorization and appropriations process.

As Congress and OERI prepare for reauthorization, the distribution of monies allocated for research, development, statistics, dissemination, and other activities should be reviewed. How much money is needed to achieve the projected needs and priorities of the office for the next 5 or 10 years? Do we have the optimal division of expenditures in OERI given those future objectives? And within each of these subcategories of expenditures, are we investing in the best mechanisms for achieving our objectives? For instance, how much of our dissemination monies should be spent on ERIC compared with alternative ways of reaching educators and policymakers? What proportion of the expenditure of NIE/OERI monies have been congressionally mandated, and what have been the advantages and disadvantages of that approach? Has the earmarking of funds for labs and centers by Congress during the past two decades been the best way of distributing and using those monies? Should such designations continue in the future, or are there more flexible and more effective ways of achieving the same overall congressional goals?

A persistent complaint about educational research and development is that it is fragmented and oriented too much toward short-term projects. Educators and policymakers usually want answers to a larger number of research questions than can be addressed, given such limited funding. Rapid changes in leadership at NIE and OERI have also contributed to the episodic and impermanent nature of much of the work of the agency. While numerous long-term research and development plans have been drawn up, few have survived more than 1 or 2 years and even those have not provided adequate guidance and direction. Since their inception 20 years ago NIE and OERI have simply never been able to create a useful short list of research and development priorities and then to stick to it for any length of time. And the most recent OERI research priorities do not provide the detailed and focused direction that is essential for guiding future work in this field.

The centers and the labs established in the mid-1960s were supposed to focus on a few long-term educational research and development problems. Unfortunately, none of the labs or centers succeeded in doing this because of inadequate overall funding and support of too many short-term projects. Educators and policymakers gambled by creating too many small centers and labs in the mistaken belief that additional monies soon would be provided so that these institutions could be properly enlarged. Efforts to fund long-term, large-scale curriculum development projects were discouraged in the mid-1970s first by Congress and then by NIE. Responding to internal and external pressures, each of the labs and centers usually funded 20 to 40 small, short-term projects, which all too frequently did not fit together into a coherent and sustained research and development program.

Given the poor return from the policy of funding numerous small, unrelated projects, Congress and OERI should reexamine their strategies for encouraging long-term research and development. How much has the fragmentation of research and development in NIE and OERI hindered the ability of those agencies to make a more lasting impact on educational practice? What portion of lab and center activities should focus on larger, long-term research and development goals? Why are the calls heard during reauthorizations for more integrated, long-term projects by the labs and centers met with disparate, small-scale projects being the ones actually funded? Are there ways of improving the coordination and long-term planning in other areas such as field-initiated grants?

For a long time, questions have been raised about what types of educational research and development should be funded by the federal government. There has been a major shift from historical and philosophical studies undertaken in the late 19th century to the behavioral and social science investigations of the 20th century. While most educators and policymakers welcomed this change, some individuals in the early 1980s challenged the increasingly exclusive use of the behavioral and social sciences. The debate today focuses more on the relative benefits of using quantitative or qualitative methods as well as on the benefits of doing case studies rather than large-scale systematic investigations.

Much of the research and development produced by educational scholars is often regarded by academics in the other behavioral and social science disciplines as methodologically and conceptually second-rate. The low opinion of the quality of much of educational research and development is frequently shared by policymakers who consider the work sponsored by NSF or NIH generally to be more rigorous and scientifically sound than that produced by OERI.

Despite recurrent questions about the quality of educational research and development, NIE and OERI have done little to assess the work of their grantees and contractors. The groups and panels reviewing the labs and centers in the 1970s,

for example, did not investigate the quality of their work. Nor did the recent National Academy of Sciences study of OERI consider the quality of the products produced by the agency or its funding recipients. A review of the statistical work done by NCES in the mid-1980s raised serious questions about its quality—while the examination of the subsequent work produced by NCES suggests that their more recent products are more reliable and rigorous. The evaluation of the quality of the research and development work produced by the centers and the labs in the early 1990s painted a mixed, but, overall, a rather disappointing picture of the conceptual and technical soundness of much of their work. Unfortunately, the most recent study by Policy Studies Associates did not include a systematic analysis of the scientific quality of their work.

More attention needs to be paid to the types and quality of studies being supported by OERI to ensure that federal research and development monies are being well spent. Have we focused too much on contemporary problems using a behavioral and social science approach without adequate attention to historical and philosophical analyses? How should quantitative and qualitative methods be used in educational research and development? What is the proper role of case studies and for large-scale investigations? How good are the OERI funded studies conceptually and technically? What can be done to enhance the quality of the work in educational research, development, and statistics?

Federal involvement in educational research, development, and statistics has often suffered from short-term and weak intellectual leadership. There have been some outstanding and distinguished leaders in NIE and OERI. But there have also been individuals appointed whose credentials were based more on their political experience or connections than on their distinguished educational and research achievements. Moreover, the rapid turnover of NIE directors and OERI assistant secretaries has not provided the much needed continuity or stability for the agency. During just the 4 years of the Bush Administration, there were five different assistant secretaries at the helm of OERI. And more recently OERI probably will have had five different assistant secretaries in a period of slightly more than 1 year. Particularly lacking during much of the past three decades has been the high quality intellectual leadership needed in a major federal research and development agency.

The history of NIE and OERI has also demonstrated the importance of having a well trained, stable professional staff. The wholesale dismissal of many competent professionals during the early Reagan years significantly weakened the agency. So has the subsequent tendency to hire few distinguished and well trained educational researchers. While not everyone in a federal research and development agency needs to be an expert in those areas, a substantial proportion of the profes-

sional staff should have those skills. And for those who are not well versed in research and development, opportunities and encouragement should be provided to receive any necessary additional training. Unfortunately, in recent years OERI has failed to attract and hire the high quality research and development experts the agency needs to achieve its internal goals as well as its congressional mandates.

During the reauthorization process, OERI and Congress should reexamine some of the questions raised about the leadership and staffing of the agency. Why has there been such a rapid turnover in leadership in NIE and OERI and what can be done to provide more stability and continuity? How well have NIE and OERI handled the repeated interruptions in leadership and what might be done in the future to make such transitions not only less frequent, but less disruptive when they do occur? What are the essential attributes of any assistant secretary at OERI and how often have individuals with these characteristics been chosen to lead this agency? What are the most important characteristics of a professional staff at any distinguished federal research, development, and statistics operation and how well have these been reflected in the ever changing composition of employees at NIE and OERI? Given the labor intensive nature of work conducted at NIE or OERI, what is the size of the professional staff needed and how does this match with what has been available in the past? Are the frequently repeated charges that NIE and OERI have not provided adequate intellectual leadership in educational research, development, and statistics fair and accurate? And what must be done to improve the amount and quality of that intellectual leadership in the future?

One of the most important issues that have not received much analysis is the charge that NIE and OERI have been too political. In contrast to much of the work in medicine or other sciences, school reforms and improvements are by their very nature more controversial and political. The education and socialization of children involves highly sensitive decisions not only about how students should be educated, but what they should be taught. Given the historic charge to the Bureau of Education to help improve state and local schooling as well as NIE's commitment to promote excellence and equity in education, it was not entirely surprising that a conservative reaction occurred in the early 1980s against the seemingly liberal and activist federal research and development agenda at NIE.

Many observers have properly condemned the more blatant and transparent political controversies, which plagued OERI during the early 1980s. But there is an even more fundamental and subtle issue of how much and what kind of separation should exist between the immediate policy interests of any administration or Congress and the independence and integrity of NIE or OERI. While almost everyone agrees that OERI should critically investigate and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of alternative educational policies and procedures, how much of its research and development agenda should be focused on short-term policy

related questions? And since NIE and OERI have always had a strong educational reform component in their mission statements, how should the leaders and staff of that agency interpret their responsibility to support any particular set of current reforms advocated by policymakers in the executive or legislative branches—especially when there is little bipartisan agreement on what educational reforms or improvements are needed?

There is also a need for an open and candid discussion of the proper role of interest groups in guiding the operations of a federal research agency. In other federal agencies such as NIH and NSF, academic and other outside lobby groups to some degree have often helped to set the general goals and to solicit the necessary funds. But most of this involvement seems to have been focused on influencing the overall orientation of those agencies or providing assistance in securing general funding increases. Much less frequently have any of these outside groups and their congressional allies attempted to mandate the details of how research monies should be spent or which specific institutions should receive federal assistance. And when outside attempts to interfere in the ongoing day-to-day operations of other federal research agencies have been made, usually there have been strong protests from those agencies, the academic community, and members of Congress committed to protecting research objectivity and integrity. Yet the troubled history of NIE's and OERI's dealings with influential outside interest groups suggests the need to explore this topic openly. While, inevitably, in any federal research and development operation there will be some politics, the extent and nature of that political involvement needs to be carefully monitored and contained lest it compromise the ability of that agency to do scientifically objective and efficient work.

Finally, while a review of the ever-changing federal strategies for educational research, development, and statistics reminds us of the difficulties of making significant and lasting improvement, it also provides occasional examples of outstanding success stories. The National Academy of Science Panel in the mid-1980s was so disappointed with the statistical work of NCES that it recommended the dissolution of that entity if immediate corrective measures were not taken. Faced with that harsh reality, a few dedicated and talented individuals emerged who accepted that challenge. Working closely with the appropriate OERI staff as well as with several influential members of Congress, they managed within the space of only a few years to create an organization is now acknowledged as a distinguished and effective federal statistical agency. Given the challenges and opportunities facing OERI today, a similar effort is needed to restructure, refocus, and revitalize the one agency, which with properly disinterested, well-trained leadership and staff, could make the education of our children the nationwide success it should be.

Endnotes

1. On the role of parents and local communities in education, see James Axtell, *The School Upon a Hill: Education and Society in Colonial New England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974); Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Gerald F. Moran and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Religion, Family, and the Life Course: Explorations in the Social History of Early America* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

2. For a discussion on how state education superintendents such as Horace Mann used statistical information, see Charles L. Glenn, *The Myth of the Common School* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988); Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education, Society, and Economic Opportunity: A Historical Perspective on Persistent Issues* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

3. On the federal role in education before the Civil War, see Paul H. Mattingly and Edward W. Stevens, Jr., eds., "*...Schools and the Means of Education Shall Forever be Encouraged*" (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 1987); David Tyack, Thomas James, Aaron Benavot, *Law and the Shaping of Public Education, 1785–1954* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Howard C. Taylor, *The Educational Significance of the Early Federal Land Ordinances* (New York: Teachers College, 1922).

4. On the creation of the Department of Education, see Donald R. Warren, *To Enforce Education: A History of the Founding Years of the United States Office of Education* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1974).

5. Sol Cohen, *Education in the United States: A Documentary History* (New York: Random House, 1974), vol. 3, p. 1406.

6. Edith N. MacMullen, *In the Cause of True Education: Henry Barnard and Nineteenth-Century School Reform* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991); Warren, To Enforce Education, pp. 98–150.

7. The Department of Education was created in 1867, but without cabinet designation. The agency was transferred to the Interior Department and renamed the

Office of Education a year later. In 1870 the Office of Education was changed to the Bureau of Education (it remained under that designation until 1930 when it was again called the Office of Education). In 1939 the Office of Education was transferred to the Federal Security Agency (which was reorganized in 1953 as the Department of Health, Education and Welfare). To minimize the confusion due to the changing names of the office, it will be referred to as the Bureau of Education to 1930 and thereafter the Office of Education. For a discussion of these changes, see Harry Kursch, *The United States Office of Education: A Century of Service* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1965), pp. 12–13.

8. Stephen J. Sniegoski, "John Eaton, U.S. Commissioner of Education, 1870–1886," unpublish. paper (December 1994); Warren, *To Enforce Education*, pp. 151–73.

9. These are rather crude estimates calculated from data provided in Darrell H. Smith, *The Bureau of Education: Its History, Activities, and Organization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1923), pp. 130–41. They do not necessarily reflect all of the costs since the salaries of the staff are listed separately, but are not broken down by function. On the educational efforts in Alaska, see Victor W. Hennigsen, III, "Reading, Writing and Reindeer: The Development of Federal Education in Alaska, 1877–1920," unpublished. Ed.D. diss (Harvard University, 1987).

10. For a more in-depth discussion of these important changes, see Maris A. Vinovskis, "Changing Views of the Federal Role in Educational Statistics and Research," unpublished. paper (September 1995), pp. 15–23.

11. National Advisory Committee on Education, *Federal Relations to Education* (Washington, DC: National Capitol Press, 1931). A minority of the National Advisory Committee opposed the creation of a Department of Education—partly out of a fear that the collection, analysis, and dissemination of educational data as a result might become politicized.

12. Paul C. Pickett, "Contributions of John Ward Studebacker to American Education," unpublished. Ph.D. diss. (University of Iowa, 1967). On the difficulties in education during the Depression, see David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

13. Daniel S. Greenberg, *The Politics of Pure Science* (New York: New American Library, 1967); James L. Penick, Jr., Carroll W. Pursell, Jr., Morgan B. Sherwood, and Donald C. Swin, *The Politics of American Science: 1939 to the Present*, rev.

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14. Dorwin Cartwright, "Social Psychology in the United States during the Second World War," *Human Relations*, 1, No. 2 (November 1947), 332–52; Philip M. Hauser, "Wartime Developments in Census Statistics," *American Sociological Review*, 10, No. 2 (April 1945), 160–69; Gene M. Lyons, *The Uneasy Partnership: Social Science and the Federal Government in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969); Maris A. Vinovskis, *History and Policymaking: Exploring the Uses of History for Educational Policymaking* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, forthcoming).

15. U.S. Office of Education, *Annual Report*, 1944 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1945).

16. Roger L. Geiger, *Research and Relevant Knowledge: American Research Universities Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Daniel L. Kleinman, *Politics on the Endless Frontier: Postwar Research Policy in the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Bruce L.R. Smith, *American Science Policy Since World War II* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1990).

17. Roger L. Geiger, "American Foundations and Academic Social Science, 1945–1960," *Minerva*, 26 (1988), 315–41; Samuel Z. Klausner, "The Bid to Nationalize the Social Sciences," in *The Nationalization of the Social Sciences*, eds. Samuel Z. Klausner and Victor M. Lidz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp. 3–40; Otto N. Larsen, *Milestones and Millstones: Social Sciences at the National Science Foundation, 1945–1991* (New Brunswick, J: Transaction Publishers, 1992); Francis X. Sutton, "The Ford Foundation: The Early Years," *Daedalus*, 116 (Winter 1987), 41–91.

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19. U.S. Office of Education, *Annual Report*, 1951 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 13. Francis Chase, a professor at the University

of Chicago, was commissioned to assess the U.S. Office of Education and confirmed the agency's deficiencies in handling statistics and research. Ibid., pp. 13–14.

20. For example, Office of Education in 1950 did not have any funds for supporting contract research. U.S. Office of Education, *Annual Report*, 1950 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 23.

21. During the Senate hearings on the Cooperative Research Act of 1954, policymakers and educators did not display much interest in research and development (the Act was the third part of the Eisenhower Administration's initiative on education). U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Education, *President's Recommendations Relating to Education*, 83rd Congress, 2nd Session. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954).

22. Robert A. Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge: Eisenhower's Response to the Soviet Satellite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

23. U.S. Office of Education, *Annual Report*, 1957 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958), pp. 183–85.

24. U.S. Office of Education, *Annual Report*, 1964 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965, p. 235.

25. Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge*, p. 164.

26. U.S. Office of Education, *Annual Report*, 1959 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960).

27. Much of the analysis and some of the text of this section as well as the next one draw heavily upon Maris A. Vinovskis, "Changing Views of the Federal Role in Educational Statistics and Research," unpublished. paper, September 1995.

28. Larsen, *Milestones and Millstones*, p. 24.

29. On federal domestic initiatives during the 1960s, see Marshall Kaplan and Peggy Cuciti, eds., *The Great Society and Its Legacy: Twenty Years of U.S. Social Policy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986); Sar A. Levitan and Robert Taggart, *The Promise of Greatness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); James T. Patterson, *America's Struggle Against Poverty, 1900–1980* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); James L. Sundquist, *Politics and Policy: The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Years* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1968).

30. Peter B. Dow, *Schoolhouse Politics: Lessons from the Sputnik Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

31. For discussions of the state of educational research in this period, see Benjamin S. Bloom, "Twenty-Five Years of Educational Research," *American Educational Research Journal*, 3, No. 3 (May 1966), 211–21; Orville Brim, Jr., *Sociology and the Field of Education* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1965); John B. Carroll, "Neglected Areas in Educational Research," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 42, No. 8 (May 1961), 339–46; Arthur P. Coladarci, "More Rigorous Educational Research," *Harvard Educational Review*, 30, No. 1 (Winter 1960), 3–11; Lee J. Cronbach and Patrick Suppes, eds., *Research for Tomorrow's Schools: Disciplinary Inquiry for Education* (New York: MacMillan, 1969); Carter V. Good, "Educational Research After Fifty Years," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 37, No. 4 (January 1956), 145–52.

32. For a description of the Cooperative Research Program, see David L. Clark and William R. Carriker, "Educational Research and the Cooperative Research Program," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 42, No. 6 (March 1961), 226–30.

33. U.S. Office of Education, *Annual Report*, 1964 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), pp. 256–63.

34. Francis S. Chase, "The National Program of Educational Laboratories: An Independent Appraisal of Twenty Educational Laboratories and Nine University Research and Development Centers Conducted Under Contract No. OEC–3–7–001536–1536" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1968).

35. U.S. Office of Education, Annual Report, 1964, p. 256. For a useful discussion of the creation and early development of the R&D centers, see Richard A. Dershimer, *The Federal Government and Education R&D* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1976).

36. The best analysis of the Gardner Task Force remains Charles Philip Kearney, "The 1964 Presidential Task Force on Education and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965," unpublished. Ph.D. diss. (University of Chicago, 1967).

37. John Gardner, "Report of the President's Task Force on Education," (November 14, 1964), p. 33. The report is available at the LBJ Presidential Library, Austin, Texas.

38. Gardner, "Report of the President's Task Force on education," p. 34.

39. Gardner, "Report of the President's Task Force on Education," p. 39.

40. Congressional Quarterly, *Almanac: 89th Congress, 1st Session...1965* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1966)

41. U.S. Congress, House, Special Subcommittee on Education, *Study of the United States Office of Education*, 90th Congress, 1st Session (House Document No. 193: Washington, DC: U.S. Governmert Printing Office, 1967), pp. 1–25.

42. *U.S. Congress, House, Special Subcommittee on Education, Study of the United States Office of Education,* pp. 1–25

43. U.S. Congress, House, Special Subcommittee on Education, *Hearings on the U.S. Office of Education*, August 10, 89th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), p.p. 758–63.

44. Richard C. Atkinson and Gregg B. Jackson, *Research and Education Reform: Roles for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1992), pp. 45–49.

45. Peter Greenwood and Daniel Weiler, *Alternative Models for the ERIC Clearing House System* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1972); Lee Sproull, Stephen Weiner, and David Wolf, *Organizing an Anarchy: Belief, Bureaucracy, and Politics in the National Institute of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

46. For a discussion of the debate within the Office of Education on the size and function of the regional educational laboratories and R&D centers in the second half of the 1960s, see Dershimer, *The Federal Government and Educational R&D*; Maris A. Vinovskis, "Analysis of the Quality of Research and Development at the OERI Research and Development Centers and the OERI Regional Educational Laboratories," unpublished. report, OERI (June 1993).

47. Dershimer, *The Federal Government and Educational R&D*, pp. 98–103; Vinovskis, "Congressional Oversight of the Regional Educational Laboratories and Research and Development Centers."

48. For a useful discussion of the beliefs of policymakers and a brief overview of these early compensatory programs, see Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Education for Children of the Poor: A Study of the Origins and Implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1978), pp. 3–25

49. Michael J. Wargo, G. Kasten Tallmadge, Debba D. Michaels, Dewey Lipe, and Sarah J. Morris, *ESEA Title I: A Reanalysis and Synthesis of Evaluation Data from Fiscal Year 1965 Through 1970*, Final Report, Contract No. OEC–0–71–4766 (Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research, 1972). For a more general discussion of the efficacy of federal educational programs, see Maris A. Vinovskis, "The Development and Effectiveness of Compensatory Education Programs: A Brief Historical Analysis of Title I and Head Start," in *Giving Better, Giving Smarter: Working Papers of the National Commission on Philanthropy and Civic Renewal*, eds. John W. Barry and Bruno V. Manno (Washington, DC: National Commission on Philanthropy and Civic Renewal, 1997), pp. 169–92.

50. Westinghouse Learning Corporation, "The Impact of Head Start: An Evaluation of the Effects of Head Start on Children's Cognitive and Affective Development," Report presented to the Office of Economic Opportunity, contract B89–4536 (1969). There were several major scholarly challenges to the findings of the Westinghouse Report including Marshall S. Smith and Joan S. Bissell, "Report Analysis: The Impact of Head Start," *Harvard Educational Review*, 40 (1970), 51–104. For a rebuttal, see Victor G. Cicirelli, John W. Evans, and Jeffrey S. Schiller, "The Impact of Head Start: A Reply to the Report Analysis," *Harvard Educational Review*, 40 (1970), 105–29. On the historical debates on Head Start, see Maris A. Vinovskis, "School Readiness and Early Childhood Education," in *Learning from the Past: What History Teaches Us About School Reform*, eds. Diane Ravitch and Maris A. Vinovskis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 243–64.

51. James S. Coleman, Ernest Q. Campbell, Carol J. Hobson, James McPartland, Alexander M. Mood, Frederic D. Weinfeld, and Robert L. York, *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 325. Coleman's report generated an extensive set of debates. For a useful introduction to these discussions, see Frederick Mosteller and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *On Equality of Educational Opportunity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Harvard Educational Review, Equal Educational Opportunity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

52. Chester E. Finn, Jr., *Education and the Presidency* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1977), p. 33.

53. For an excellent analysis of the passage of the NIE legislation, see Sproull et al., *Organizing an Anarchy*, pp. 60–71.

54. U.S. Congress, House, Select Subcommittee on Education, *To Establish a National Institute of Education, Hearings...on H.R. 33, H.R. 3606, and Other*

Related Bills, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, Feb. 18, 1971 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 10.

55. U.S. Congress, House, Select Subcommittee on Education, *To Establish a National Institute of Education*, May 11, 1971, pp. 228–29.

56. *Congressional Record*, 117, Pt. 30 (November 4, 1971), p. 39274.

57. The House Select Subcommittee on Education under the chairmanship of John Brademas (D-IN) provided the bipartisan congressional leadership for the creation of NIE. Sproull et al., *Organizing an Anarchy*, pp. 60–71.

58. Sproull et al., *Organizing an Anarchy*.

59. U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee on Education, *To Establish a National Institute of Education*, Feb. 18, 1971, p. 41.

60. For additional discussion of the program purchase approach, see Vinovskis, "Analysis of the Quality of Research and Development."

61. The importance of CEDaR in congressional decision-making was candidly acknowledged by the mid-1970s. Roald F. Campbell et al., *R&D Funding Policies of the National Institute of Education: Review and Recommendations*, National Institute of Education (Washington, DC: Department of Health, education, and Welfare, 1975), p. 35.

62. Campbell, et al., *R&D Funding Policies of the National Institute of Education*, p. 27.

63. Panel for the Review of Laboratory and Center Operations, *Research and Development Centers and Regional Educational Laboratories: Strengthening and Stabilizing a National Resource*, Final Report (Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, 1979), p. iv.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. vi-vii, 13, 35.

65. National Institute of Education, "Long-Term Special Institutional Agreements with the Seventeen Existing Laboratories and Centers," National Institute of Education (January 15, 1979).

66. A National Academy of Science (NAS) panel was assembled to examine the issue of basic research in education and had strongly recommended expansion in

this area. Sara B. Kiesler and Charles F. Turner, *Fundamental Research and the Process of Education* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1977).

67. National Council on Educational Research, *Sixth Annual Report of the National Council on Educational Research* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, 1980), p. 14.

68. For details on this initiative, see National Institute of Education, "State Dissemination Grants Program Announcement, 1979," July 12, 1979.

69. Kent J. Chabotar and Diane G. Kell, *Linking R&D with Schools: An NIE Program and Its Policy Context* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, 1978); Karen Seashore Louis and Sheila Rosenblum, *Linking R&D with Schools: A Program and Its Implications for Dissemination and School Improvement Policy* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, 1981).

70. Dow, *Schoolhouse Politics*.

71. National Council on Educational Research, *Fifth Report of the National Council on Education Research* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Education, 1979), p. 18; National Council on Education Research, *Sixth Report of the National Council on Education Research,* p. 14.

72. Atkinson and Jackson, Research and Education Reform, pp. 45–49.

73. Office of Management Analysis and Systems, "Management Evaluation of the National Center for Education Statistics," (Washington, DC: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, August 1978), p. 20.

74. Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, memorandum for the Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget and the Assistant Secretary for Education, November 7, 1978, pp. 1–2.

75. Deborah A. Verstegen, "Educational Fiscal Policy in the Reagan Administration," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 12, No. 4 (Winter 1990), p. 367.

76. Deborah A. Verstegen and David L. Clark, "The Diminution in Federal Expenditures for Education During the Reagan Administration," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 70, No. 2 (October 1988), p. 137.

77. Moreover, in order to provide the most efficient and effective services with the diminished funds, the Congress stipulated that labs and centers "upon comple-

tion of existing contracts, receive funding in accordance with government-wide competitive bidding procedures and in accordance with principles of peer review involving scholars and State and local educators to ensure the quality and relevance of the work proposed." U.S., Congress, House, *Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981: Conference Report*, 97th Congress, 1st Session (H.R. 3982, Report No. 97–208, 1981), p. 729.

78. For a useful analysis of the lab and center competitions, see Thomas W. Schultz, "Behind Closed Doors: Peer Review in the NIE Research Center Competition," unpublished. Ed.D. diss. (Harvard University, 1988).

79. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Education Information: Changes in Funds and Priorities Have Affected Production and Quality*, GAO/PEMD–88–4 (Washington, DC: GAO, 1987), p. 21.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–27.

83. For an excellent discussion of NIE's political struggles during the early 1980s, see Philip Zodhiates, "Bureaucrats and Politicians: The National Institute of education and Educational Research under Reagan," unpublished. Ed.D. diss. (Harvard University, 1988).

84. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Education Information*, pp. 81–83.

85. Zodhiates, "Bureaucrats and Politicians."

86. James Hertling, "E.D. Official Questions N.I.E.'s Effectiveness, Structure," *Education Week*, 4, No. 27 (March 27, 1985), p. 10.

87. James Hertling, "Finn to Head Reorganized Research Unit," *Education Week*, 4, No. 40–41 (August 21, 1985), pp. 14–15. Under the new plan, most NIE's programs were to go into the Office of Research and most NCES statistical efforts were relocated in the Center for Statistics. Later, the Center for Statistics went back to its former name, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). To minimize confusion, the unit will be referred to as NCES throughout this text.

88. U.S. Congress, House, *Reauthorization of Sections 405 and 406 of the General Education Provisions Act*, 99th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986).

89. Daniel B. Levine, ed., *Creating a Center for Education Statistics: A Time for Action* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1986), p. 4.

90. Emerson J. Elliott, "New Directions and Initiatives at NCES: Implications for Educational Research, Policy, and Practice," *Educational Researcher*, 18, No. 3 (April 1989), 11–16.

91. The budgets for OERI have been reconstructed from OERI documents and the annual House and senate appropriation committee reports. I am indebted to Thomas Brown of OERI in particular for his assistance in assembling the recent budgets. For analytic purposes, in this and subsequent discussions of the overall OERI budget the funds for the library programs will be excluded.

92. Perhaps equally interesting, center funding from FY 1983 to FY 1993 had risen 63.1 percent while that of the labs for the comparable period had increased 136.6 percent.

93. U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on Select Education, *Oversight Hearings on the Office of Educational Research and Improvement* (OERI), 100th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), p. 255.

94. Christopher T. Cross, et al., "Report of the Laboratory Review Panel on the 1987 Review of Laboratories," Office of Educational Research and Improvement (October 6, 1987).

95. Christopher T. Cross, "Approval Concurrence of the Centers to be Competed in the FY 1990–91 National Educational Research and Development Centers Competition," memo to the Secretary of Education, January 22, 1990.

96. Ravitch, somewhat like Cross, also stressed the importance of developing a more effective system of disseminating research findings. Robert Rothman, "New O.E.R.I. Head Sees Top Priority Ways to Marry Research and Practice," *Education Week*, 10, No. 40 (July 31, 1991), p. 37.

97. Vinovskis, "Analysis of the Quality of Research and Development."

98. Atkinson and Jackson, *Research and Education Reform*, p. 148. The creation of the NAS Panel had been initiated by OERI Assistant Secretary Cross.

99. Atkinson and Jackson, *Research and Education Reform*, p. 150.

100. Atkinson and Jackson, *Research and Education Reform*, pp. 150–51.

101. Atkinson and Jackson, *Research and Education Reform*, p. 152.

102. Atkinson and Jackson, *Research and Education Reform*, pp. 151, 153.

103. U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on select Education, "Preliminary Staff Report on Educational Research, Development, and Dissemination: Reclaiming a Vision of the Federal Role for the 1990's and Beyond," 100th Congress, 2nd Session, unpublished. report, Washington, DC (September 1988), p. 8.

104. U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on Select Education, *Hearings on Reauthorization of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*, 102nd Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), p. 5.

105. U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on Select Education, "Preliminary Staff Report," pp. 37–38.

106. Vinovskis, "Analysis of the Quality of Research and Development."

107. His views were expanded and refined in an influential, co-authored article. Arthur E. Wise and Gerald E. Sroufe, "A Response to America's Reform Agenda: The National Institutes for Educational Improvement," *Educational Researcher*, 19, No. 4 (May 1990), 22–25.

108. U.S. House, Committee on Education and Labor, *Report on the Educational Research, Development, and Dissemination Act*, 102nd Congress, 2nd Session, Report 102–845 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), p. 134.

109. "OERI Bill Bogged Down as Deadline Nears," *Report on Education Research*, 24, No. 15 (July 22, 1992), 3–4; Robert Rothman, "With Death of O.E.R.I. Bill, Reorganization Put Off," *Education Week*, 12, No. 6 (October 14, 1992), 22.

110. Diane Ravitch, "The State of the Agency," *OERI Bulletin*, No. 1 (Winter 1992–1993), p. 2.

111. Dave Harrison, "Riley Picks 11 to Run ED Offices Pending Nominations," *Education Daily*, 26, No. 16 (1993), 1–2; Gerald E. Sroufe, "Emerson Elliott—Proud to be a Federal Bureaucrat," *Educational Researcher*, 24, No. 7 (October 1995), 29–33.

112. Asking the Schedule C political appointees to resign was a routine and expected event in these situations and did not arouse much question or anxiety among the staff. When President Clinton's Schedule C appointees arrived, some of them privately questioned why OERI had not eliminated or at least isolated more of the excepted service staff appointed by Ravitch. But Elliott and then Sharon Robinson, decided to retain and use Ravitch's nonpolitical appointees. There were occasions, especially at the beginning, when some of the Clinton newcomers were concerned about the loyalty and dedication of former Ravitch staff. Over time it soon became clear that even some of the more visible and outspoken OERI supporters of Ravitch served the new administration ably and loyally.

113. Annette Licitra, "NEA Official Closes In On Top OERI Job," *Education Daily*, 26, No. 55 (March 23, 1993), 1, 3; Annette Licitra, "Clinton Nominates Candidates for Research, Higher ED Slots," *Education Daily*, 26, No. 61 (March 31, 1993), 1, 3.

114. David Hoff, "ED Adds Four Clinton Nominees To Assistant Secretary Roster," *Education Daily*, 26, No. 124 (June 29, 1993), 4.

115. Annette Licitra, "ED's Research Director Seeks Dialogue With Practitioners," *Education Daily* (July 23, 1993), p. 17.

116. "OERI Bill Bogged Down as Deadline Nears," *Report on Education Research*, 24, No. 15 (July 22, 1992), 3–4; "OERI Reauthorization Hanging With Only Weeks Left," *Education Research*, No. 19 (September 16, 1992), 7; Robert Rothman, "House Passes Compromise Reauthorization," *Education Week*, 12, No. 4 (September 30, 1992), 25; Robert Rothman, "With Death of O.E.R.I. Bill, Reorganization Put Off," *Education Week*, 12, No. 6 (October 14, 1992), 22.

117. Annette Licitra, "House, Senate Resuscitate Last Year's OERI Bills," *Education Daily*, 26, No. 27 (February 10, 1993), 1, 3; Jeannie Wong, "Congress Seeks Overhaul of Federal Education-Research Program," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 21, 1993), A26; Lynn Schnaiberg, "In Clearing O.E.R.I. Bill, Senate Backs More Funding," *Education Week* (November 10, 1993), 21; Mark Pitsch, "Action on reform Bill Seen Unlikely by Year End," *Education Week* (November 24, 1993), 11.

118. Mark Pitsch and Lynn Schnaiberg, "Senate Amends, Then Nears Vote, On Clinton's Goals 2000 Measure," *Education Week* (February 9, 1994), 18–19; Mark Pitsch, "Next Stop for Goals 2000 Bill: House-Senate Conference," *Education Week* (February 16, 1994), 18–19; Lynn Schnaiberg, "O.E.R.I. Compromise Strikes Balance On Who Will Control Research Agenda," *Education Week*

(March 23, 1994), 17; Annette Licitra, "OERI Negotiators Settle on Research Institutes, Advisory Board," *Education Daily*, 27, No. 62 (March 31, 1994), 4.

119. For example, see Gerald Sroufe, Margaret Goertz, Joan Herman, Sam Yeager, Gregg B. Jackson, and Sharon P. Robinson, "The Federal Education Research Agency: New Opportunities and New Challenges for Researchers," *Educational Researcher*, 24, No. 4 (May 1995), 24–30.

120. In these calculations, the funds for library programs have not been included as they are part of a separate congressional budget. If the funding for library programs were included in the overall OERI budget totals, the proportion of monies spent on the more traditional programs would be even smaller.

121. Moreover, there are concerns that the monies allocated for educational technology were not being well spent. Too often the funds were used to buy equipment, but teachers did not receive the training necessary to use the hardware and software properly. Peter West, "O.T.A. Decries Lack of Focus on Teachers," *Education Week* (April 12, 1995), 1, 11.

122. All the figures on the changes in staff FTEs were provided by Sharon Taylor of the Budget Services, the Department of Education on May 1, 1997. I am greatly indebted to Ms. Taylor for running the special tabulations of data on OERI and the other agencies, which made this analysis possible.

123. Most of the earlier calculations of OERI expenditures have not included the costs of the library programs, which are treated separately from the OERI budget by the Congress. However, to estimate the amounts of monies spent by the agency per employee in FY 1992 and FY 1997, the expenditures for library programs were added because the total FTEs included the individuals working in the library programs. In the future the budget and staff of the library programs, but not the National Education Library, will be located outside the U.S. Department of Education.

124. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Education Information: Changes in Funds and Priorities Have Affected Production Quality*, GAO/PEMD–88–4 (Washington, DC: GAO, 1987), pp. 81–83.

125. Public Law 103–227, Title IX, Sec. 912, (c) Appointment of Employees, (1).

126. OERI has employed various contractors over the years. For example, the Office of Research (OR) had a multiyear, multimillion dollar contract with the Pelavin Research Institute to provide needed services such as organizing confer-

ences, assembling research materials, and commissioning background papers. Similarly, Professional and Scientific Associates worked for the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB) to organize their workshops and meetings.

127. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1996, Part 5: Department of Education*, 104th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995), pp. 1409–1410.

128. For example, in April 1995 OERI was authorized to hire 8 new employees. Madeleine Kunin, "Critical Hires," Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, April 17, 1995.

129. Sharon P. Robinson, "Job Preference Selection for the New OERI," OERI memorandum, September 8, 1994.

130. Sharon Robinson, "The New OERI Structure and Staffing Plan," OERI memorandum, October 26, 1994. A lot of the staff choose to stay where they were, but many did apply for new positions—especially since the reorganization of OERI forced many individuals to find a new home.

131. Preston G. Foster, "Note to All OERI Employees," OERI memorandum, April 28, 1995.

132. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings...Appropriations for 1997, Part 5: Department of Education*, p. 1387.

133. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings...Appropriations for 1997, Part 5: Department of Education*, p. 1388; U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, Appropriations for 1998, Part 5: Department of Education*, 105th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), p. 1485.

134. On the changes in the size of centers over time, see Vinovskis, "Analysis of the Quality of Research and Development."

135. Atkinson and Jackson, *Research and Education Reform*, pp. 150–51.

136. Vinovskis, "Analysis of the Quality of Research and Development."

137. The National Center on Policy and Teaching Excellence at the University of Washington in Seattle was funded by the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management.

138. At the same time, of course, OERI was under great pressure to fund some of these smaller centers in order to provide at least some coverage in areas seen as substantively and politically important.

139. U.S. Department of Education, *News* (September 9, 1997).

140. Not everyone is agreed upon the need for having prior research designs for the center projects. At an OERI workshop, a former chair of the center director's group argued against requiring centers to submit to OERI a detailed research design. This person felt that they were unnecessary and time-consuming to develop. This was a minority view, however, as most other researchers and center directors did see the value of providing research designs for individual projects.

141. As will be discussed later, an alternative to this more sporadic and uncoordinated approach to creating centers as to use a life course analytic framework that had been developed for OERI in June/July 1995 by Vinovskis. For more discussion of this alternative approach as well as a conceptual critique of the announcement in the *Federal Register* for the center competition, see Maris A. Vinovskis, *History and Policymaking: Exploring the Uses of History for Educational Policymaking* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, forthcoming), chapter 8: "A Life Course Framework for Analyzing Educational Research Projects."

142. At one time Sharon Robinson announced that Edgar Epps, a recent OERI consultant from the University of Chicago, would be the Research Advisor. However, he really did not try to fulfill that role and had relatively little impact on the direction and coordination of the overall research activities in the agency.

143. Susan Gruskin, Kim Silverman, and Veda Bright, *Including Your Child* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1997); Janice Owens, *Learning and Earning: Analysis of HEA Title II-B Graduate Library Fellowship Program Recipients, Fiscal Years 1985–1991* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1997); National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education, *Directory of Projects*, 1997 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

144. Naturally, there are a few notable exceptions. For example, Clifford Adelman, a member of the Postsecondary Institute, has been a major and innovative scholar using college transcripts. Clifford Adelman, *A College Course Map:*

Taxonomy and Transcript Data (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990); Clifford Adelman, *The New College Course Map and Transcript Files: Changes in Course-Taking and Achievement, 1972–1993* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

145. U.S. Congress, House, *Hearings...Appropriations for 1997, Part 5: Department of Education*, pp. 309–12.

146. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings...Appropriations for 1998, Part 5: Department of Education*, p. 1485.

147. Atkinson and Jackson, eds., *Research and Education Reform*, pp. 128–29.

148. For example, Preston Kronkosky, Executive Director of the Southwest Educational Laboratory (SEDL), testified on behalf of CEDaR at the OERI reauthorization hearings that the Office of Research (OR) should be reorganized into several large research institutes and that funding for the field-initiated research should be expanded substantially. He also endorsed the idea that the labs should follow the research priorities outlined in the legislation. U.S. Congress, House, Subcommittee on Select Education, *Hearings on the Reauthorization of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*, March 17, 1992, 102nd Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), pp. 61–65.

149. Public Law 103–227 (March 31, 1994), Title IX, sec. 941 (h).

150. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), "Regional Educational Laboratories for Research, Development, Dissemination and Technical Assistance, RFP #95–040: Statement of Work," U.S. Department of Education, 1995, p. 3.

151. OERI, "Regional Educational Laboratories...RFP #95–040: Statement of Work," p. 9.

152. These criticisms and suggestions had been raised by Vinovskis, a consultant to OERI. Maris Vinovskis, "Comments on Draft Statement of Work for Regional Educational Laboratory RFP," Memo to Margo Anderson, Eve Bither, Chuck Hansen, and Bob Stonehill, OERI, February 12, 1995.

153. OERI, "Regional Educational Laboratories...RFP #95–040: Statement of Work," p. 14.

154. OERI, "Regional Educational Laboratories...RFP #95–040: Statement of Work," p. 13.

155. OERI, "Regional Educational Laboratories...RFP #95–040: Statement of Work," pp. 26–27.

156. OERI, "Regional Educational Laboratories...RFP #95–040: Statement of Work," pp. 27–28.

157. Atkinson and Jackson, eds., *Research and Education Reform,* p. 153.

158. For example, see U.S. Congress, Senate, *Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriation Bill, 1997*, 104th Congress, 2nd Session, Report 104–368 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), p. 205.

159. Robert E. Slavin, "Design Competitions: A Proposal for a New Federal Role in Educational Research and Development," *Educational Researcher*, 26, No. 1 (January/February 1997), p. 22.

160. Maris Vinovskis, "Further Comments on Proposed FIE Replication and Evaluation of Promising Practices," memorandum to Jan Anderson, Joe Conaty, and Dick Hays, OERI, May 20, 1994.

161. Office of Assistant Secretary, "Office of Educational Research and Improvement," OERI October 20, 1994.

162. "Forgione is Confirmed for Top NCES Post," *Education Week*, 15, No. 39 (June 19, 1996), p. 25.

163. Although just recently the OERI group working on the national tests has been disbanded and the "borrowed" employees have returned to their regular posts.

164. National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), "Policy Statement on Redesigning the National Assessment of Educational Progress," National Assessment Governing Board, Washington, DC, August 2, 1996, p. 5.

165. NAGB, "Policy Statement on Redesigning the National Assessment of Educational Progress," p. 17.

166. National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), "Schedule for the National Assessment of Educational Progress," National Assessment Governing Board, Washington, DC, March 8, 1997.

167. Gary W. Phillips, "Technical, Methodological, and Operational Issues in the Implementation of the NAGB Redesign of NAEP," presentation at the Forum on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Redesign, OERI, June 3, 1997.

168. NAGB, "Schedule for the National Assessment of Educational Progress"; Phillips, "Technical, Methodological, and Operational Issues."

169. As a member of the Department of Education's Independent Review Panel, Vinovskis has periodically challenged the members of the Clinton Administration for their failure to provide adequate assessments for subjects like civics, geography, and history. While his suspicions that these subjects are being deliberately slighted have been confirmed, no one seems to be taking any action to remedy this problem.

170. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), *NAEP 1994 U.S. History Report Card: Findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), p. 34.

171. Indeed, information on the differences in achievement by the educational-level of the parents or whether the student received Title I assistance suggest that economic disadvantage may be a very powerful factor. NCES, *NAEP 1994 U.S. History Report Card*, pp. 36, 38.

172. For recent NCES studies which do employ multivariate techniques, see Paul T. Decker, Jennifer King Rice, and Mary T. Moore, *Education and the Economy: An Indicators Report*, NCES 97–269 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997); Laura Lippman, Shelley Burns, Edith McArthur, *Urban Schools: The Challenge of Location and Poverty*, NCES 96–864 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

173. And when the Administration still had not appointed one by early February 1996, a frustrated Robinson stated that "[w]e're at a point where we really need the board." Debra Viadero, "E.D. Spends Time on Task of Reshaping Research Efforts," *Education Week*, 14, No. 20 (February 8, 1995), p. 29. Similarly, Gerald Sroufe, the Executive Director of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), agreed that "[t]here is a point when you can't do anything until you do

something else, and that something else is the board." Viadero, "E.D. Spends Time on Task of Reshaping Research Efforts," p. 19.

174. Patricia Ann Baltz, teacher, Camino Grove Elementary School, Arcadia, California, 1993 Disney Outstanding Teacher of the Year; Ann Blakeney Clark, principal, Alexander Graham Middle School, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1994 National Principal of the Year; Rudolph F. Crew, superintendent of schools, Tacoma, Washington; Robert W. Marley, elementary school teacher, Pearl Kessler School, Wichita, Kansas; and Claire L. Pelton, associate director, Advanced Placement Program, the College Board, vice chair, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. U.S. Department of Education, "Riley Appoints First Research Policy and Priorities Board," U.S. Department of Education News, February 27, 1995.

175. Gene Bottoms, director of High Schools That Work program in 13 southern states, Southern Regional Education Board; John T. Bruer, president, James S. McDonnell Foundation, expert in cognitive science and education; Joyce A. Muhlestein, specialist, Utah Center for Families, member, national Parent Teacher Association's Health and Welfare Commission; Alba A. Ortiz, associate dean for academic affairs and research, College of Education, University of Texas, specialist in bilingual and special education; and John Theodore "Ted" Sanders, state superintendent of schools, Ohio. *Ibid.*

176. Jomills Henry Braddock II, professor and chair, Department of Sociology, University of Miami; Kenji Hakuta, professor of education, Stanford University; Sharon Lynn Kagan, senior associate, Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University; Glenda T. Lappan, professor of mathematics, Michigan State University; and Edmund W. Gordon, distinguished professor of educational psychology, City University of New York.

177. Sroufe believed that "[t]hese are independent thinkers. I think some of the members would be hard-pressed to recite the words to the systemic-reform hymn of this Administration." And Dena Stoner, Executive Director of the Council for Educational Development and Research (CEDaR) praised the appointees by saying that "[i]t looks like the kind of group that Congress intended it to be." Lynn Schnaiberg, "Riley Appoints Independent Board to Set Research Agenda," *Education Week*, 14, No. 24 (March 8, 1995), p. 15.

178. National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB), "Minutes of NERPPB Meeting," Washington, DC, March 30–31, 1995.

179. "New Research Post Filled," *Education Week* 15, No. 39 (June 19, 1996), p. 25.

180. Edmund Gordon, for example, "expressed for the record his unhappiness with the relative amounts of money that goes for labs and centers as opposed to the amounts available for discretionary work" and John Bruer called for further discussions of the entire matter. NERPPB, "Minutes of NERPPB Meeting," March 30–31, 1995.

181. Research Priorities Planning Team, "Research Priorities Plan," OERI, June 1, 1995.

182. Maris A. Vinovskis, "A Life Course Framework for Analyzing Educational Research Projects," unpublished. paper prepared for OERI, July 1995. A revised version of the essay will be published in Vinovskis, *History and Policymaking*.

183. Sharon P. Robinson, Kenji Hakuta, and Ted Sanders, *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners: A Framework for Education Research 1997* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), p. iv.

184. Robinson, Hakuta, and Sanders, *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners*, p. 17.

185. On the "Success for All" program, see Robert E. Slavin, Nancy L. Karweit, and Barbara A. Wasik, "Preventing Early School Failure: What Works?" Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, Report No. 26 (November 1991); Robert E. Slavin, Nancy A. Madden, Lawrence J. Dolan, and Barbara A. Wasik, *Every Child, Every School: Success for All* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 1996).

186. Robinson, Hakuta, and Sanders, *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners*, pp. 60–65.

187. On the importance of summer learning, see Doris R. Entwisle and Karl L. Alexander, "Summer Setback: Race, Poverty, School Composition, and Mathematics Achievement in the First Two Years of School," *American Sociological Review*, 57 (February 1992), 72–84; Barbara Heyns, *Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling* (New York: Academic Press, 1978).

188. "The level of public interest in improving America's schools is unprecedented, a solid body of education research now exists upon which to build new knowledge, and evidence is mounting that past research has already led to important advances in education practice." Robinson, Hakuta, and Sanders, *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners*, p. 2.

189. Robinson, Hakuta, and Sanders, *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners*, pp. 10–11.

190. The lack of focus on the negative impact of poverty appears to be one of emphasis as the authors are certainly aware of the powerful impact of socioeconomic status. For example, see Robinson, Hakuta, and Sanders, *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners*, p. 55.

191. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, *Bulletin* (Summer 1997), p. 2. Given how general the OERI research plan is, the priorities of the Department generally can be encompassed. The point, however, remains that the OERI research priorities are not even viewed by the top OERI management as being the real focus of the agency's activities.

192. Much of the discussion and language in this section draws upon a commissioned background paper prepared for OERI. Maris A. Vinovskis, "An Analysis of the Proposed Phase Three Standards for the Conduct and Evaluation of OERI Activities," unpublished. paper, OERI (March 26, 1997).

193. *Ibid.*, Sec. 912, 1, 2.

194. *Ibid.*, Sec. 912, 1, 2.

195. *Ibid.*, Sec. 912, 1, 2.

196. U.S. Department of Education, *Standards for the Conduct and Evaluation of Activities Carried Out by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)—Evaluation of Applications for Grants and Cooperative Agreements and Proposals for Contracts (34 CFR Part 700)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, September 1995).

197. A preliminary draft of the phase two standards are available in the briefing book, Eve Bither, "Materials for Meeting of Standards Committee," December 5, 1996 (Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, November 22, 1996).

198. For example, see the useful, but somewhat one-sided discussions at the Committee on Standards meeting on December 5, 1996. Committee on Standards, "Transcript of Proceedings of the National Research Policy and Priorities Board," Washington, DC, December 5, 1996 (Washington, DC: ACE-Federal Reports, 1996).

199. The Clinton Administration's slow pace in replacing assistant secretaries is not confined just to the Department of Education. The White House has not filled vacancies in more than a third of the top 21 jobs at the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). For example, the post of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation in DHHS and the position of the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families have been vacant for nearly a year. Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Keeping Track: Top Health Vacancies," *New York Times* (September 22, 1997), p. C14.

200. Regina Lightfoot-Clark, "Clinton Taps Foundation Officer to Lead OERI," *Education Daily* (October 23, 1997), p. 4.

201. Carol Innerst, "Goodling Plans Effort to Stop National Tests: Critics Fear Rise of National Curriculum," *Washington Times* (July 31, 1997), A7. Millicent Lawson, "House Blocks, While Panel Settles On, New Tests," *Education Week*, 17, No. 4 (September 24, 1997), pp. 1, 20.

202. Millicent Lawson, "Test Proposal to be Tested by Experts," *Education Week*, 17, no. 13 (November 19, 1997), 1, 20.

203. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriation for 1998, Part 5: Department of Education*, 105th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), p. 418.

204. *Ibid.*

205. *Ibid.*

Appendices

Appendix A

May 14, 1998

Dr. Kenji Hakuta
Chair
National Educational Research
Policy and Priorities Board
80 F Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20208-7564

Dear Kenji:

We appreciate the Policy Board's invitation to respond to Maris Vinovskis' "Changing Federal Strategies for Supporting Educational Research, Development, and Statistics." Professor Vinovskis introduces many issues that are important not only for the OERI Policy Board but for all concerned with federal education R&D policy. We would expect members of the Policy Board to find the historical section of the paper especially informative, as this information is not often discussed.

The Government and Professional Liaison Committee (GPL) is a standing committee of the American Educational Research Association. Its members and staff have been concerned with the authorization, monitoring, and support of the federal research programs throughout the period discussed in the paper. Through the GPL Committee, AERA provided guidance for the creation of the National Institute of Education (NIE), for the reorganization of the research and statistics programs within the newly created Department of Education in 1981, and for the several authorizations of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), including the most recent one which created the Policy Board and the present institute structure. The GPL Committee has had an opportunity to discuss the draft document on several occasions and these views represent matters of consensus.

1. Staffing

There are three problems related to professional staff in OERI: (1) there are too few of them; (2) there are too few of them with strong research credentials and/or extensive experience in research grant management; (3) efforts at staff development have been sporadic and, on occasion, misdirected.

Numbers. Early in the Clinton administration, a high official proclaimed that there was so many staff at OERI that many did not have enough to do. Unfortunately, the reality is that OERI led the way for the downsizing of the Department of Education, and currently in both the research and development programs and in statistics is understaffed. Professor Vinovskis usefully has provided the hard numbers regarding staff reductions and the resulting research-management load on the remaining staff.

Experience. OERI, through its "successful" downsizing effort has provided almost an entire bureaucracy of senior staff to private consulting and professional association work in the Washington area. The "early out" process encouraged by the Clinton administration was effective in reducing the number of management personnel, but in the case of OERI, it has the dysfunctional aspect of an equally dramatic reduction in experience and expertise. Vinovskis laments the absence of "excepted service" positions; others recommend use of "rotators" as employed in the National Science Foundation. Some hope to add expertise through the addition of "fellows" or "visiting scholars," an effort AERA has supported by working with NCES to provide a very small program. While such steps are important, it must be observed that it was not possible to recruit senior scholars from outside the agency to fill the critical positions of institute directors, despite a Herculean effort by Sharon Robinson, who was then the assistant secretary. Recruitment is a serious problem for OERI.

Professional Development. In our view, only two of the past 8 assistant secretaries of acting assistant secretaries of OERI have considered the professional development needs of the agency. Others saw the OERI staff as either instruments or obstacles toward a particular end, or simply did not have time in office to think about such long-term problems. Among the indignities heaped on professional staff have been restricted travel to carry out their responsibilities, occasional public humiliation, and general lack of encouragement to become partners with the research and development community. Obviously, there are individuals who have managed to maintain active professional relationships even within a hostile environment, but organizations cannot be built on occasional professional successes. We believe that the Policy Board can do much by raising questions about staffing and professional development within the agency as an agenda item at its

regular meetings, and including such information in its reports to Congress and the public.

2. Structure and Management

OERI is made less effective because: (1) there is presently no mandated structure for providing leadership among the institutes; (2) the ORAD tail often wags the OERI dog, and the directives from Congress to ORAD preclude coherent R&D agenda for OERI; (3) relationships among the Policy Board, Department, Assistant Secretary, NCES, ORD, and the Education Policy Evaluation Program (EPE) need to be clarified.

OERI. Eliminating the coordination role of the old "Director of Research" position appears to have been an oversight in development of the current legislation. Unless the assistant secretary for OERI provides strong leadership, it is clear that it is difficult for the individual institutes to coordinate their activities under the present structure, and it is not self-evident that this is an appropriate role for the assistant secretary to handle personally. This is a problem that should be fixed through authorization, most usefully in the context of other organization and management concerns. The Policy Board might address this problem in the reauthorization by recommending the appointment of a senior scholar to coordinate and motivate the institute directors. Such an individual would be appointed by and report to the assistant secretary.

Institutes, national research centers, regional laboratories, and field-initiated studies make up the bulk of the OERI research and development portfolio. Questions have been raised continuously about the relative mix of dollars appropriate to support each area. Some, including many AERA members, would have all research funds dedicated to field-initiated research, similar to the approach taken in NSF and NIH. It is good to remember, however, that the idea of national research centers was the solution to a previous problem—a fragmented research program built primarily around field-initiated studies. The institutes were intended to provide a productive mix of center, field-initiative, and agency sponsored research—a comprehensive portfolio—and might yet do so with adequate appropriations.

We believe it would be a mistake to call for a major overhaul of OERI. While we share the disappointment of most in the discrepancy between the federal program as envisioned by the Congress and as implemented so far, it is important to recall that progress has been made with regard to development of structures and procedures in a relatively short time. We favor keeping the institute structure (and the Policy Board) and keeping a mix of national research centers, laboratories, and

field-initiated studies as core research activities. The existing legislative formula for funding these entities within the institutes would work, if only an adequate amount of money was provided. We understand concerns raised about the constraints and inflexibility of the present structure and the frustration this causes OERI staff. However, curtailing the political viable core research programs is the equivalent of trimming the tree beginning with the roots. The OERI Policy Board could address this problem by helping Congress and the administration understand more clearly the sources of the organizational problems encountered by the agency.

One characteristic of the success of NIH has been its ability to grow by addition of new institutes. The equation has been that new diseases or new treatments resulted in new institutes. This has not happened within OERI and there is presently no one responsible for proposing modification of the institute missions. For example, no one in the agency called for an institute on reading to match this new national commitment. Likewise, education technology should be the basis for an institute within OERI. In both instances resources have been provided without consideration of a structure necessary to work through these problems on a sustained basis. Of course, the administration's OERI proposal for FY1999 totally ignores the capacity-building needs of the institutes.

ORAD. Professor Vinovskis implies that funds should be transferred from the school improvement portfolio to the R&D portfolio. However, it is not currently within the power of OERI or the Policy Board, or even the Secretary, to make such transfers, as Congress has stipulated the missions of most of the school improvement programs. The recent discussion with ORAD staff and Policy Board members during the January meeting of the Board was instructive on this point: ORAD has not requested any of the programs now existing within their portfolio; few, if any, of their programs are reasonably considered R&D programs. However, the difficulty cannot be resolved by fiat. What is needed is an assessment of the positive and negative consequences of the programs housed in ORAD and a recommended plan of action in one of two directions: (1) separate the research programs from the school improvement programs by moving one or the other to another agency or department; (2) accept the status quo and seek to maximize the benefits provided (e.g., congressional support, generally positive media attention, dedicated staff). This issue might well be central to the Policy Board's discussion of reauthorization.

NCES. As is noted in the document, NCES represents a success story of sorts in having moved from a problematic agency to one that is gaining the respect and support of both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government. Such progress certainly offers hope for OERI, but obscures the problem of coordi-

nation between NCES and OERI. There are excellent reasons for a statistics agency to have considerable autonomy in analysis and reporting of information. However, there are also excellent reasons to have coordination and collaboration among the research and statistics agendas within the U. S. Department of Education. Currently, such collaboration as exists is the result of the efforts of individuals within each agency, rather than from leadership of OERI.

3. Peer Review

Concern for peer review procedures appear throughout the authorizing legislation for OERI—much like marbled fat in a side of beef. We are encouraged that the Policy Board has supported an outside review of peer review procedures within OERI, and we look forward to working with the study panel on this important matter.

Peer review is a cardinal principle of research associations. While there are often difficulties associated with grant awards, OERI has had a more unfortunate history than most federal research agencies, and it is therefore more important for OERI to develop and implement exemplary procedures. One special difficulty for educators is to satisfy the often-conflicting demands for relevance and for quality research. Frequently, the result is to establish a review panel of educators and parents to assess relevance and researchers to judge the quality of the proposed research. Such hybrid panels are not peer review panels.

As an applied field, it is essential that the relevance of education research be stated in terms of the problems of teachers, administrators, students, and policymakers. However, the drive to have professional educators engaged in every aspect of the research enterprise is misguided on two counts. First, while there clearly was a time when researchers resided in an ivory tower, that time is long past. Leading researchers in AERA work with educators to solve problems identified by educators. Second, one simply cannot evaluate methodological approaches to research on the basis of "general" expertise in the field of education.

We urge the Policy Board to consider a new distribution of responsibility in thinking of its research agenda and research award process. The research agenda of problems to be addressed should involve in a serious way the entire education public; the decision of how to accomplish research objectives that have been identified by this broad, representative education public should be made by peer reviewers. We recommend that the Policy Board work to separate decisions of research relevance to educators and policymakers from decisions of research appropriateness and quality.

4. Politics and Policymaking

It is important for Policy Board members to note that education research—and research in NIH and NSF and DOD—is fraught with politics from the initial creation of the agencies, through their annual appropriation, through congressional oversight, and even through determination of what research is to be conducted, how, by whom. We share the concerns raised by many about the negative consequences to OERI of perceived politicization through congressional interference, but this is only one political issue that should be of concern to the Policy Board.

Some recent examples of congressional influence on research agendas of other agencies might be helpful. One example was the failure of NIH to include women in studies of heart disease, a policy that changed only when there were a number of women in Congress. As a second example, the entire behavioral science directorate of NSF was threatened with elimination through the appropriation process just two years ago. Finally, while the leadership of the NSF wished to stay in the District of Columbia, the entire agency was moved to Virginia, home of the chair of the Senate appropriations panel responsible at the time for NSF. Every dimension of federal research programs is subject to political forces outside its control, and the problem is better viewed as one of managing the harmful aspects of such forces rather than eliminating them.

There are at least two dimensions of politics that must be of concern to the Policy Board as it exercises leadership on behalf of OERI and the nation's education research capability: (1) relations with Congress; (2) relations with the Department. It is unfortunately the case that there are very few supporters of OERI in Congress and very many detractors. Candid visits with Hill staff suggest an "anywhere but there" attitude toward placing important research initiatives in OERI. These negative views stem from two sources: (1) the agency is often viewed as "merely" a support engine for the political agenda of the administration; (2) few know anything about OERI.

Professor Vinovskis mentions the adverse effect of OERI's leadership on the testing issue, which has antagonized Republicans already skeptical of OERI. It is important to recall that the Bush administration's reform agenda—America 2000—became the actual agenda of OERI, to the dismay of Democrats. Clearly the Policy Board has responsibility through its development of standards and a research priorities plan to serve as a buffer between the agency and the political agenda of both the Congress and the administration, Democratic or Republican. In addition, much repair work needs to be undertaken if OERI is to be regarded as a competent agency on the Hill. It suffers because it is in the Department of Educa-

tion—recall the Department's many fiascoes with direct loans—but also because it has not demonstrated to skeptics that it has a coherent plan to conduct quality research. The OERI Policy Board, through its efforts to create and sustain a coherent research agenda, through its dedication to peer-based performance review, and through its outreach measures, can do much to improve this image.

The Policy Board needs to recognize that its mandate has not been honored by the Clinton administration. It has been expected to follow in the wake of the administration's myriad reform initiatives, rather than to set direction for the research and development aspect of OERI. Last year the staff of OERI was required to provide support for the administration's testing agenda. This year there will be a new administration agenda, and once again the Policy Board will be expected to acquiesce, and once again OERI will be expected to reorganize its priorities in support of the new agenda. The administration did not request increased funding for OERI's research and development programs in FY 1999. It will not be possible for the Policy Board to set priorities for the R&D program until it changes its relationship with the administration.

5. Financial Resources

The amount of money available for research and development is a major barrier to the conduct of good research. The National Academy of Science report on OERI recommended great increases in research funding for all aspects of the portfolio, and neither the institutes, laboratories, or field-initiated research studies are within shouting distance of the recommended amounts. More recently the President's Council of Advisors for Science and Technology (PCAST) recommended hugely increased funding for education R&D. Most recently, in February, testifying before the Senate Education Task Force chaired by Senator Frist, Chris Whittle declared that we deprive schools of the greatest engine of change in American history, research and development. Whittle suggests that 3 percent of school expenditures should be invested in research.

While critics challenge OERI to respond quickly and effectively to emerging issues, there is very little money available for agency-initiated activities. It is not possible for any institute to achieve its full legislative mandate, or even a substantial portion of it, with the low level of funding that has been available since the authorization. The agency continues to try to respond to many diverse and constantly changing demands, but every aspect of the research activity—conceptual clarity, methodological soundness, evaluative monitoring, and reporting of results, suffers for want of resources.

We know you are aware of the problem, but still feel obligated to call attention to the duress and dysfunctions created through paltry funding of the institutes, especially as the present authorization levels have not been achieved. An important role you can serve in the reauthorization is to help make a strong case that much more could and should be accomplished through adequately funded education R&D.

We hope that the OERI Policy Board will be a major voice in the reauthorization of OERI. This will require not only that the Policy Board has a comprehensive plan addressing pervasive issues, but that it find a way to make its message heard within and without the Department. We hope the discussion of these will be helpful to the Policy Board in thinking through its reauthorization position and strategy.

We appreciate your leadership, and the strenuous effort the Policy Board has undertaken to provide a much stronger capacity for federal education research. It is important work and we hope you will call on us if we can be of additional help.

Sincerely,

William A. Firestone
Chair

Gerald E. Sroufe
Director
Government and Professional Liaison Committee
American Educational Research Association

Appendix B

April 29, 1998

Ms. Eve M. Bither
Executive Director
National Educational Research
Policy and Priorities Board
80 F Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20208-7564

Dear Eve:

Thank you for inviting the national education research centers to offer their perspective about federal strategies for support of education research and improvement. As you know, the Organization of Research Centers (ORC) was organized in 1986 in order to promote communication and cooperation among the centers. ORC is affiliated with the American Educational Research Association. While it is fully appropriate for any center to take its own position on federal research policy issues, I am writing to you as chair of ORC and my comments have been reviewed and approved by all ORC members.

We understand that the members of the OERI Policy Board have received a draft document on the subject of federal strategies for support of education research and development authored by Professor Maris Vinovskis. He offers a wide-ranging essay, which includes opinions on many topics well beyond the ORC purview. It is unclear if, in selecting the term "Changing" for his title, Professor Vinovskis sees to describe changes that have occurred in federal strategies for supporting educational research, or if he is an advocate for specific changes which should occur. For the most part, the draft document offers descriptive statements implying strongly that change is required, but little direction about specific changes to be sought in a reauthorization.

When one gathers together the various comments about national research centers scattered throughout the draft document, one might conclude that: (1) support for centers and labs has had devastating consequences for the quality and quantity of knowledge produced within OERI; (2) too much of the money awarded research centers goes to overhead, administration, and dissemination; (3) the idea of one-time renewal grants for national research centers is "controversial"; (4) centers are too small; (research conducted within the national centers is too fragmented and oriented too much to short-term projects; (6) much of the research and development conducted in education is judged second-rate. If there are positive statements about the contribution of national research centers—other than those

attributed to others—we fail to note them. In developing our response we have held up for examination the central observations about national research centers, provided our perspective about each, and offered some suggestions for the OERI Policy Board to consider with regard to authorization.

1. Investment in Centers and Labs

The OERI Policy Board has been consistently concerned about the size and shape of the OERI research and development portfolio. It is clearly the case that relatively little of the OERI total budget supports core R&D activities and that most of these funds presently are devoted to centers and labs. However, Professor Vinovskis is incorrect when he states:

When the Government Accounting Office (GAO) examined the extent and nature of the budget cuts for NIE, they documented the devastation brought about by the combination of overall budget cuts and the congressional protection of labs and centers.

The GAO report illustrates that there were budget cuts and that centers and labs were cut less than others because of congressional mandates, but nowhere in the report do they state or infer that congressional protection of the centers and labs restricted the total production of information. Board members might wish to review for themselves the citation (p.21 of the GAO report) provided in support of this statement. Another perspective on the congressional mandates (e.g., such as the minimum size of a research center or the percentage of an institute budget that must be allocated to centers) is that these protections are all that kept the federal education R&D program alive during difficult times, such as the Reagan administration, as chronicled by Professor Vinovskis. The GAO report states:

Although all information-gathering activities were affected by budget constraints, congressionally mandated activities received smaller reductions and thereby consumed an increasing share of available resources. Activities that were not required by law were vulnerable to changes in priorities, funding, and policies.

Education research support requires a base in the political system. This simple observation explains why for years there was virtually no money for field-initiated research while the labs and centers were able to survive, albeit with reduced funding. The goal of the OERI Policy Board should be to help establish a broader political base for all education R&D programs in its portfolio, perhaps by building on the platform offered by the centers and labs.

Most importantly, while a historical view can be helpful in gaining perspective, it must be recalled that the GAO report was prepared to offer advice for the very

authorization under which centers are now operating. If the institutes achieved the appropriation authorized at the present time, national research centers would represent only one-third of their portfolio. The problem is not that the center budgets are too large—they in fact represent less money now than in FY 94—but that the institute budgets have not begun to achieve funding to their authorization levels. We believe the OERI Policy Board should support the present authorization language regarding centers and should press for changes to gain a more satisfactory appropriation for OERI's R&D programs. ORC members will continue to help in this effort.

(There is another large issue facing the OERI Policy Board—the proportion of funds in ORAD relative to funds in the institutes. ORC members will be willing to help think through these issues with the Board or with OERI staff, but this topic is beyond the scope of our present statement).

2. Proportion of Funds Devoted to Research

We are aware of no basis, other than his own observations which were made prior to the award of all but one of the current centers, for Professor Vinovskis's comment that the amount of center funds spent on research is "surprisingly modest," with a large amount going to overhead, administrative costs, and dissemination. The three elements represent very different phenomena and must be understood as such to understand center operations. "Overhead" typically represents the "indirect research costs" which are assessed by the universities in accordance with a rate established in negotiation with the federal government. Neither the center directors nor OERI have any control over this rate. "Administration" or governance is proportionately higher in smaller centers. Certain governance tasks must be performed in any accountable and effective organization; in large centers the relative share of funds devoted to administration is less than in small centers. Regarding dissemination, most centers have been encouraged—through RFP's and agency admonitions—to disseminate aggressively, and all research supporters would agree that dissemination is key to maintaining a useful and visible enterprise.

We recommend that the OERI Policy Board seek to achieve funding at the upper end of the scale of current centers, discouraging the creation of smaller centers in favor of other research vehicles such as Broad Agency Awards or special projects. Such a funding strategy will do much to assure that relatively more of the award is devoted to direct research activities. In addition, we commend the Board for its ongoing efforts to deal constructively and creatively with dissemination issues within OERI. We urge caution with regard to generalizations about how to achieve effective dissemination within a complex agency. For some centers, dissemination is a central component of their R&D strategy, while for others it is

less central; but for OERI overall, dissemination is critical. We recommend that the Board adopt a backward mapping approach to thinking about dissemination: who is to receive what research information should be the first question, followed by implementation and structural questions.

3. Center Grant Renewal Opportunity

Having just met with Acting Assistant Secretary Ricky Takai, we do not understand why Professor Vinovskis believes the notion of one-time renewal of center awards is controversial. It is different. It will cause new thinking within the centers and the agency. But controversial? It was the considered judgment of those seeking improved federal research capacity in education to support longer award periods as are routinely provided to research centers in NSF. The primary advantage of longer award periods, of course, is to permit development of sustained research on important problems, and to facilitate development of an appropriate infrastructure. A most immediate advantage of a 10-year grant is that it would minimize both the start-up and wind-down time of a national center's activity. The compromise Congress was willing to accept was to hold the initial award period to 5 years but to permit one-time renewals of the grant. It was not a controversial decision within the Congress. It should be noted also that ORC has fought for competitive awards and peer review throughout its history and has not sought to "save" centers that lost out in competition.

We recommend that the OERI Policy Board explicitly supports either grant renewal or longer terms for centers along the lines now proposed. As long as the center is doing good work and as long as its mission continues to represent a national priority, it should receive a one-time grant renewal.

4. Center Size

We agree with Professor Vinovskis and other that centers funded at the lower end of the present funding range have a difficult time fulfilling the expectations for national research centers. The minimum size of centers now provided in the OERI authorization is $1.5 million. At the time of the authorization this represented a relatively substantial center and, most importantly, provided a safeguard against a return to the days of the "mini-center" of $400,000 for 3 years. We recommend that the OERI Policy Board seek to raise the center minimum to $2.5 million for any new centers in the next authorization.

5. The Coherence of Center Research

Professor Vinovskis observes, without documentation, that "a persistent complaint about educational research and development is that it is fragmented and

oriented too much toward short term projects." The problem is real. However, recommendations to improve the situation require that one is clear about (1) who is making the complaint; (2) which part of the research community they are viewing; and (3) in what time period they are operating.

Policymakers and school-based educators are seldom worried about short-term or fragmented research. They are addicted to it and their decisions encourage it. What they want most from research are answers to the questions before them at a given historical moment. Actually, the few persons concerned about fragmentation are established researchers. Their concern is not to achieve some arbitrary standard of "centrality" or "length of project," but simply to achieve quality research. It is difficult to build a knowledge base from the small-scale, often inadequately conceptualized studies that comprise much of the research literature.

However, "fragmented and "short-term" are not pejorative terms to use with regard to the majority of field-initiated studies, doctoral dissertations, and congressionally-mandated efforts. Such studies serve many useful purposes, and they can often be folded in with other studies to increase knowledge. But a field based only on dissertations and field-initiated studies would lack coherence and would be fragmented. Indeed, it was in response to the fragmented character of field-initiated studies that led to the formation of centers and laboratories in the first place.

By definition, national education research centers should be places where a coherent research agenda is underway. We believe this is the case, and note that Professor Vinovskis bases his allegation about the fragmentation of center work on his brief experiences in looking at centers prior to the creation of most current centers, with frequent references dating back to the experiences of NIE. ORC agrees that coherence should be a question always before the centers and OERI staff. We recommend that the OERI Policy Board assign one of its committees the task of reviewing the issue of coherence within institutes and centers. We believe they will be pleasantly surprised at the diligence and creativity of the national research centers in shaping their programs in ways to further coherence. We recommend also that the Board examine the relationships of FIS projects to the centers and to the institute missions. We believe that information mechanisms can be greatly improved and that center research and FIS research can be mutually supportive.

6. The Quality of Education Research

The charge that the quality of research undertaken by educators is second-rate is as troubling to OERI Policy Board members as to center directors. Among the reasons for this common problem is unfounded arrogance on the part of some who

disdain education research, a culture of poverty in the funding and conduct of research, and the fact that there are generally no standards permitting the public to distinguish between a novice dissertation or a senior scholar's life work. This is why ORC believes the performance standards called for in the authorization, and being developed by the Board, are so important. It is also why we believe that longer term funding to achieve coherent research agendas is a necessary condition for solid center research.

Those of us who work closely with NSF and NIH understand that there are inconsistencies in the quality of research conducted in those agencies as well. Moreover, we believe that the center research will be quality-competitive with that of, say, programs in the NSF Directorate on Education and Human Resources. But we cannot afford to permit policymakers to believe that education research is second rate; the OERI Policy Board must take a leadership role in making this case. We have several recommendations. First, the Board should support the suggestion made by Professor Vinovskis that efforts be undertaken within OERI to rely on quality assurance systems developed by grantees. Specifically, the Board might devote some time at one of its meetings to learn of the quality review procedures developed by the centers. Second, the Board should support the numerous efforts underway to develop research-based synthesis documents and to have these disseminated as OERI's primary product, precluding having policymakers conclude that glossy documents associated with the Fund for the Improvement of Education are its only product. Third, the Board should promote the center and Field Initiated Studies (FIS) research that merit promotion, both within the administration and to the Congress.

We have necessarily offered a relatively narrow perspective about federal strategies that should be adopted to better support research and development. We recognize that the various component of OERI and the many challenges before OERI must be addressed in a comprehensive fashion. Center directors will look forward to working with the OERI Policy Board on these issues, as well as those which directly affect the centers.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share our perspective on the place on the national research centers in the federal education research system.

Sincerely,

Susan Fuhrman
Chair, Organization of Research Centers

Appendix C

Ms. Eve Bither
National Educational Research
Policy and Priorities Board
U.S. Department of Education
80 F Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20208-7564

Dear Eve:

Thanks for sending me a copy of Maris Vinovskis's paper, "Changing Federal Strategies for supporting Educational Research, Development, and Statistics." I asked several members of my staff to read the document and provide me with comments. In this letter, I summarize our discussions about the paper.

Overall the document makes for depressing reading. His portrayal of the history of federal funding of research is one of overblown expectations, underfunded projects, lack of focused direction, fragmented work, etc. Unfortunately, as one who has been involved as a researcher and developer on federally sponsored projects since the late 1950's, I find the story he tells to be both incomplete and biased. It is incomplete in that he tells only the story about federal strategies in the U.S. Department of Education. NSF is mentioned but not in terms of its support of research and development, and no other agency's work in educational research is mentioned. It is biased in that he tells the story strictly from the political policy perspective in relationship to the Department of Education. His facts about funding, shifts in political priorities, changing personnel, and so forth may be correct, but as a researcher he fails to picture the impact of such funding on the educational research enterprise in this country.

The picture could be more balanced by acknowledging four facts:

First, since the 1960's, increased federal funding for educational research has provided the impetus for a proliferation of studies. The number of research journals, scholarly books, attendance at research conferences (e.g., attendance at AERA's annual meeting was 300, and over 10,000 in 1997) has increased dramatically. We will not argue that all such research studies have been of high quality, but the questions investigated, methods used to investigate those questions and what we know about schooling have expanded. Unfortunately, our gain in knowledge is not often apparent. For example, if one examines an issue of a first-rate scholarly research journal (e.g., *American Educational Research Journal, Cognition and Instruction, Journal for Research in Mathematics Education,*

all started since 1960), one could question how the particular set of articles contributes to solving any educational problem. The problem is that an individual study contributes only a small piece of information, from a particular perspective, about some phenomenon. Similarly, the combined studies from a research center can contribute only several related studies. Resources are too limited to do more. Nevertheless, we would argue that we know a lot more about learning, current schooling practices, and so forth, than was known a quarter century ago. For example, our understanding of how children learn to add and subtract whole numbers is today quite different from what it was in the past. Federal funds from NIE, NSF, and OERI have supported work for over 20 years that has produced a consensus on a framework, instructional materials, staff development, comparative data with traditional approaches, and longitudinal data for both student development and teacher change. Similarly, syntheses of research on the way humans learn (see NRC's *Developments in the Science of Learning*) have implications for the way scholars now consider and understand aspects of schooling.

Second, the political assumption that basic research findings can directly change educational practice needs to be challenged. Good research produces only reliable knowledge. Using that knowledge to produce new products or change practices involves problems of a different sort, engineering and design problems. Changing schooling practices is an engineering design problem, but design studies are hard to do and rarely funded. Also, much of what is now understood from basic research challenges the current design characteristics of contemporary schooling. For example, much of the research about the teaching and learning of mathematics clarifies problems that need to be addressed. Many middle school mathematics teachers have never been taught with understanding some of the mathematics they are expected to teach. Design studies should follow, but rarely do. Even when new and better instructional practices based on research are introduced, it is very difficult to implement them, because there is resistance to changing traditional modes of operation. Such was the case with team teaching in the elementary grades, or replacing high school algebra and geometry courses. The successful introduction of new materials or models presupposes a whole constellation of changes in teacher preparation and assessment strategies.

Third, the allocation of scare resources is out of balance. While copious funds are spent each year documenting the existence of problems (*NAEP*, *TIMSS*), other funds are spent on studies designed to demystify components of particular problems. We take exception to Professor Vinovskis's contention that there is "little evidence that most of the new centers are engaged in the systematic, long-term development of educational materials and models," which he sees as a continued weakness of OERI in general. On the contrary, the development of educational materials and models has not been the focus of NIE or OERI efforts, although such work has been undertaken. In our center, we have been able to do this by

coupling funds from NSF and the MacArthur and Spencer Foundations. No one source of funds is adequate to support the creation of a community of scholars committed to long-term research and development. Our position is that OERI research ought to be just that—research, with some development efforts that add value to work sponsored by other agencies. For example, for mathematics and science education let NSF pay for curriculum or technology development, and let OERI figure out classroom implications. Also, let other agencies worry about scale, and let OERI develop ideas worthy of scaling. Finally, at the present time there are political calls for more comparative evaluation studies. There is no question that such research is warranted, but only if new materials or models are worthy of such expensive and time-consuming investigations. NSF is currently funding us to conduct on a small scale one such study on materials developed with NSF funding. A significant complication for educational researchers, unlike those in the medical or agricultural fields, is that school administrators, teachers, and parents do not want their students to be subjects in experiments, on the one hand, but on the other, they do not want any of their students to be control subjects, when convinced that new material is worthy.

Fourth, those of us who have directed research centers over the years have learned to live with the vagaries of Washington politics and changing federal bureaucracies so that we can carry out systematic, long-term research. We are concerned about leadership and staffing of OERI, inasmuch as OERI, with a few exceptions, is not staffed with experienced scholars knowledgeable about research or familiar with past studies in an area of schooling.

We agree that NIE and OERI have tried to disseminate research information to the public and practitioners, but providing reliable knowledge is not sufficient. Vinovskis argues quite effectively that devoting large amounts of center funding to traditional forms of dissemination is a waste of money. It is important for all of us to focus on developing knowledge that can be spread before we commit so much of our funds to newsletters, interim reports, and so forth.

We support his contention that centers should conduct sustained, substantive programs of research, rather than fragmented, isolated, short-term projects. At present, we are attempting to involve in our agenda science education researchers, who previously have been individual entrepreneurs. We agree that having adequate funding for field-initiated studies is an important alternative, but to conduct important work in a sustained manner requires an established research environment where a community of scholars can interact over time. It takes substantial funding over a very long period to create such an environment.

Finally, as the reauthorization of OERI is being considered, we would be willing to assist. Schooling is a complex social process that does not lend itself easily to

controlled, "scientific" investigative processes. Notwithstanding the ongoing problems resulting from meager funding and a lack of weel-trained investigators, we think the federal investment in educational research has had a considerable beneficial impact. Continued and increased support of research is important for our nation's future.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Romberg
Director
National Research Center for Improving Student Learning and
Achievement in Mathematics and Science

Biographical Information About Maris A. Vinovskis

Maris Vinovskis is the Bentley Professor of History and a Senior Research Scientist at the Center for Political Studies in the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. He has been at the University of Michigan for over 20 years and has recently served as the chair of the Department of History. He has authored or co-authored 7 books, edited or co-edited another 7 volumes, and written approximately 90 scholarly articles and essays. His most recent book, *History and Policymaking: Exploring the Uses of History for Educational Policymaking* will be published by Yale University Press next year. Vinovskis has received a Distinguished Faculty Award from the University of Michigan and has won a Guggenheim Fellowship. He was elected President of the History of Education Society and was also named a member of the National Academy of Education.

Vinovskis was the Deputy Staff Director to the U.S. House Select Committee on Population in 1978 and served as a consultant to the Office of Family Planning Programs and the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He was the Research Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in both the Bush and Clinton Administrations in 1992 and 1993 and then served as a consultant to OERI for 2 years. He is currently a member of the Independent Review Panel for the U.S. Department of Education as well as a participant on the federal Even Start evaluation board.

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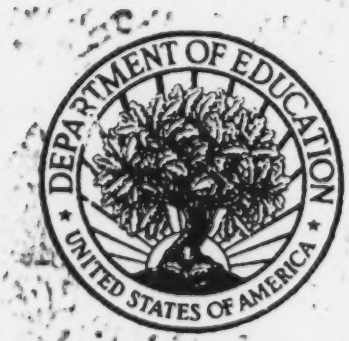

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